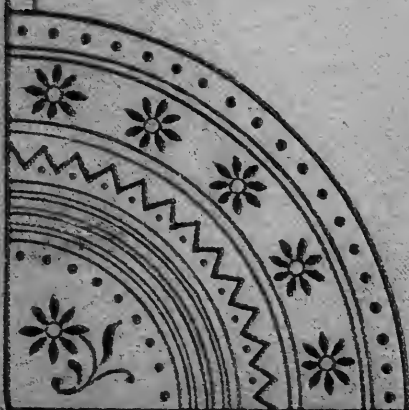
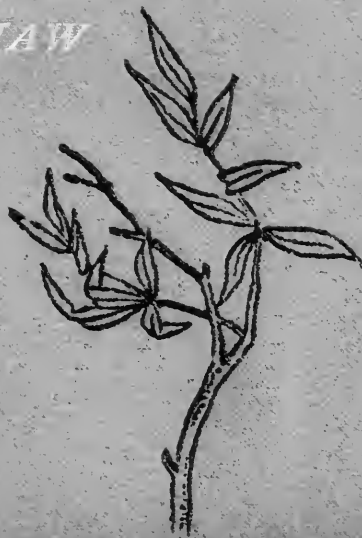


METHODISM IN MY
NATIVE VILLAGE

THOMAS WILLSHAW



School of Theology



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Methodism in My Native Village;

OR,

SHORT BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

EXTENDING

OVER A CENTURY.

BY

THOMAS WILLSHAW.

ROCHDALE:

"JOYFUL NEWS" DEPÔT

BW 73

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PREFACE.



THE following pages have been written as the result of the gathering which took place at the village of Cheddleton, on the occasion of the Centenary Celebration. Many incidents were remembered and related which greatly interested the large number of people then assembled. The writer was earnestly requested by several ministers and other friends to gather up these incidents, and put them in a permanent form. An opinion was expressed that a historical sketch of Methodism at Cheddleton would be of use in other villages. The work has been "a labour of love;" and I here most willingly express

my thanks to those friends who have so cheerfully assisted in giving information for the accomplishment of my task.

I may also mention another interesting fact which has had something to do with the writing of this little book. My old and much-esteemed friend, the Rev. Thomas Champness, has been much interested in these stories of Methodism in the village, and has very kindly undertaken to put them through the Press. The great movement he has originated in connection with the villages of England, and the wonderful results already achieved, make it clear he has been led by the good providence of God, to establish an evangelistic agency which numbers over one hundred evangelists. These young men are scattered over the country ; also in India, China, and Africa.

One very important and interesting fact is, that *The Joyful News* movement is carried on under Mr. Champness's personal management. The large amount of money required for this work is raised entirely by voluntary contributions, and the profits

from the sale of *The Joyful News* and other religious literature.

I have a grateful sense of personal obligation to him for the very kind interest he has taken in these sketches, and my wish and prayer is, that this little book may, in some humble way, help him in the great work in which he is engaged. I am quite persuaded this effort will not bear the criticisms of the learned; it is only a very simple record of the work of Methodism in a very small, out-of-the-way village, which has affected the lives and destinies of a large number of people, and the results of which will not be known till the heavens are no more.

If only a few derive encouragement and help from this narrative, the object for which it has been written will be attained.

T. W.

HOLMROOK,
ALTRINCHAM, 1891.







Methodism in My Native Village.

CHAPTER I.

“How soft the music of those village bells,
Falling at intervals upon the ear
In cadence sweet ! now dying all away,
Now pealing loud again, and louder still,
Clear and sonorous as the gale comes on.
With easy force it opens all the cells
Where Mem’ry slept.”

COWPER.

THE village of Cheddleton is situated in North Staffordshire, three miles distant from the town of Leek, and about seven miles from the Potteries.

The old turnpike road from Manchester to London runs directly through the village, and in the olden times a great deal of interest was excited by the arrival of the stage-coach, as it drove

up to the Red Lion Inn. A journey to London in those days was quite an event in a man's life, taking some four days to reach the metropolis, whereas the great journey can now be taken from Manchester to London in four hours and a quarter. As the village is approached from Leek by the high-road, the most striking object in the landscape is the old Parish Church, with its square battlemented tower, which stands out conspicuously on the top of a hill, and with several rows of small houses, has a pretty and picturesque appearance. In the valley below the church, run the river Churnet and the North Staffordshire Canal. In the church tower there was a peal of three bells. On the summer morning the sound of those bells was most melodious in my young ears. The ding, dong, bell, as it reverberated along the valley, had a musical charm which to me was perfectly delightful.

The village is small, with a population of not more than some three hundred inhabitants. The only places of worship are the Parish Church and a small Wesleyan Chapel. Fifty years ago, the church had only a very small congregation--the clergyman, clerk, churchwarden, organist, and

the sexton or grave-digger, frequently constituted the greater part of the worshippers ; since that time a great change has taken place in the church and its surroundings. In the interior, new oaken pews, oaken screens with carved tracery work, a beautiful organ, etc., have been introduced. Outside, the churchyard has been enlarged, stone walls built around, and costly gates erected, and a much larger congregation also tells of the quickened life of the Church of England.

In the year 1853, the Rev. J. B. Dyson published a little book, containing a history of Methodism in the Leek Circuit ; from this book I learn that Methodism was introduced into the village about the year 1788 or 1789 ; the exact date cannot be ascertained, but the following record has been left of the visit of a local preacher : "At one time, being called to preach out of doors at a small country village of the name of Cheddleton, a great number of people were collected together in order to prevent his preaching, or to do him a personal injury. On this occasion he manifested much of the spirit of his Great Master ; for he and his friends, when returning home, kneeled down and prayed fervently to God for their persecutors,

that the Lord would 'open their blind eyes,' and give them to know 'the day of their visitation.'” After this, it is said that out-door preaching was continued in the village for some years.

The preachers were exposed to very severe and bitter persecutions; they were assailed with rotten eggs, clods, and any filth and missiles that came to hand. I was told by my mother, that on one occasion the preacher had taken his stand opposite the church, and the people, finding they could not silence him in any other way, set the church bells ringing. Evil, however, was not altogether triumphant. There was a gentleman standing on the outskirts of the congregation, listening to the earnest words of the preacher, and, when the bells began to ring, he exclaimed with great earnestness, as he smote the ground with his walking-stick, “Downreet, lads, this is too bad! this is too bad! this is not fair play!” and shortly afterwards he invited the preachers to his house, and was a kind and hospitable friend to them so long as he lived. This gentleman was the father of the late much-esteemed John Hambleton.

This early friend to the Methodist preachers found his way into the kingdom of God; and he

and his excellent wife were greatly esteemed for their generous hospitality to all who came under the shelter of their Christian home. It was stated by one who was present during Mr. Hambleton's last illness, that on the last night of his life, when he was crossing over to the city of God, sweet and heavenly melody was heard, in the room where the good man was passing away.

In 1792, a circumstance occurred which has proved to be of the utmost importance, and which has probably affected the future of the village for generations to come. Mr. Robert Cooper, then a young man, came to reside there, and he immediately opened his house for preaching. The services were probably held in one of the four cottages which stand on the turnpike road, between the Red Lion and the Grange Farm. My mother informed me that the congregations worshipping in this cottage were often greatly annoyed and bitterly persecuted. It was customary to fasten the door from the outside, and then to get on the roof from the back of the house, and stop up the chimney, and in this way fill the house with smoke and soot, and so bring the service to a close. On one occasion a strong rope was fastened to the

handle of the door on the outside, and a hen was forced down the chimney; as it came down in a state of alarm, it spread the soot over the congregation, blackened their faces, and spoiled their clean linen, rendering the atmosphere almost suffocating. Notwithstanding the cruel persecutions to which they were exposed, the work went on, and people were converted. A little society was formed, and they realised the blessedness of those who were "persecuted for righteousness' sake."

Among those who worshipped at this cottage was my maternal grandmother, who was induced to go and hear the Methodists. She was greatly impressed with what she heard. My grandfather was an honest and steady-going Churchman, but altogether ignorant of the nature of experimental religion; he was greatly scandalised by the conduct of his wife, who persisted in her determination to go to the Methodist meetings. He remonstrated with her about the discredit she was bringing upon the family by her stubborn determination to mix with these despised people. She reasoned with him about the folly and wrong of condemning a people he knew so little about, and assured him, there was nothing in their preaching but could

he proved to be in complete harmony with the Scriptures ; and if so, they would prove right, and their persecutors in the wrong ; and as we must all answer for ourselves at the judgment day, would it not be better to go and hear them for himself ? Still, he could not look upon them in any other light than as “ wolves in sheep’s clothing.”

At the same time, his wife’s words impressed him so much, he thought he would hear them ; but he was not prepared to show himself in the congregation ; and he resolved to go by stealth, after the people were settled at the service, and the blind drawn down, and he would listen outside. As he listened, he was surprised to find the sermon so full of Scripture, and every point in the discourse confirmed by a direct appeal to God’s Word. My grandfather came to the conclusion, if these people were right, he was wrong ; he became uneasy and restless, but not so concerned as to come boldly out, and join them in their Sunday services. He was invited by one of the friends to go over to Leek, and hear one of the travelling preachers. He did so, and got into a corner of the chapel, where he thought nobody would know him. The preacher took for his text, “ For the great day of His wrath

is come, and who shall be able to stand?" The text and sermon went home like a nail fastened in a sure place ; he was led to the Saviour, and in the end died in peace, resting on the world's Redeemer.

My grandmother, who was a strong-minded woman, became a decided Christian, lived for a few years in fellowship with the people of her choice, witnessing a good confession, and then closed her earthly career in peace, with a sure trust in the mercy of God through faith in Christ. She had one son, who left home at an early age, and was apprenticed to a wood-turner at Macclesfield. During the early part of his apprenticeship, he went among the Methodists, and was converted to God. He was a young man of intelligence and superior talents, and soon began to exercise his gifts for the benefit of others. He began to preach, and as a local preacher distinguished himself by his diligent preparations, and the zeal and energy with which he applied himself to the work of preaching Christ's Gospel. When his mother died, he was of course present at the funeral ; a large number of friends assembled in and near the cottage in which she died, and this devoted son of a good mother seized the opportunity afforded by the presence of

so many people inside and outside the house, and preached a sermon from the words, "The living know that they shall die." It was a time of great weeping. The preacher wept, and the people wept; and the effects of that service lingered in the memories of those present for many years afterwards. One man stated he had often heard of the power of God being felt among the Methodists, but he did not know what it meant until that service. "But now," said he, "I know what it means, for I have felt it for myself." My Uncle Rigby, the young man above referred to, removed to Stockport, and for many years held a responsible situation as manager of a large cotton mill. He was highly respected by a large circle of friends, and his services were in great request as a local preacher. His influence for good was widely extended. His declining years were spent in the town of Leek, (three miles only from his native village), where he finished his earthly course and entered into rest.

The influence of Methodism in this village is well seen in the family and descendants of the friend whose life I have briefly noticed. He had a large family of sons and daughters, and it is believed the whole of them were truly Christian

people. One son, Mr. John Rigby, of Stockport, was a man widely known, and very highly esteemed for his fine Christian character, and his superior talents. He rose to eminence in the town; for many years he was a member of the Town Council, a class-leader, a Sunday-school superintendent; he had also a young men's class, out of which a number of local preachers were raised up and prepared for their work. John Rigby was one of the most gifted local preachers in the Methodist Connexion. He was always welcome in the pulpits of the largest chapels, and some of his able and eloquent discourses are remembered by people who heard them delivered fifty years ago. He set himself the task of preaching at least one sermon in the open air in every street in Stockport, and it is believed he accomplished this. Mr. James Rigby, brother to the above, was a man of excellent character, but of a more retiring disposition; he held the office of circuit steward in the Stockport South Circuit, and for many years was connected with the work of Methodism in that town.

If we follow the stream of influence as it flows onward in this particular family a little further, we shall see how it happily descends, generation

after generation, deepening and widening in its flow—children and children's children; for at least four generations are found in the way of righteousness. Mr. John Rigby left a son who is worthy of his honoured father, a man of education and great ability, devoting himself to the work of the Lord, as a Sunday-school superintendent and circuit steward, in the circuit that was the scene of his father's labours. Mr. James Rigby left two sons, both of whom have done much useful work in the Methodist Church. Mr. Samuel Rigby is now the superintendent of the Sunday school connected with Trinity Chapel, Stockport, which is largely supported by his liberality and labours. He has taken a great interest in the poor lads of the town, has had a large class for their instruction and improvement; has had a constant regard to their temporal advantage, and numerous are the testimonies he has received from grateful hearts in different parts of the country. I might further illustrate my subject from other branches of this family; but this will suffice to show the widespread influence for good, which has resulted from the labours of the poor, despised, and persecuted Methodists in the little village many years ago.



CHAPTER II.

“And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.”—MARK iv. 26, 27.

GREAT efforts have been made, especially in modern times, to discover the source of those great rivers which, in their majestic progress through the countries of the world, affect mightily the material interests of peoples who live in the lands through which they flow.

If such great interest is attached to the discovery of the spring among the mountains, that forms the little rill which, as it flows on, gathers its tributary streams until it becomes a river of increasing magnitude and power, how much more interesting is it to note the beginnings of religious life in the experience of an individual Christian, or the formation of a Church or religious society in any particular locality, which, though small and feeble

in its beginnings, gradually grows and develops, until its influence is powerful and far-reaching! Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." Also, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." This appears to be the Divine method in nature, in providence, and in grace. The mighty oak springs from the tiny acorn; the shepherd boy is raised up to be a mighty monarch; so in the growth of Christ's kingdom in the world, the humblest instrumentalities have been used in its establishment and extension. These truths are fully illustrated in our narrative of Methodism in this village.

As we have before stated, in 1792 Mr. Robert Cooper came to the village. He was a man of God—earnest, devout, consistent, and whole-hearted in his consecration to the service of the Saviour, from the beginning to the end of his Christian career. With him there was no wavering, no

half-heartedness, no trimming between Christ and the world, and nothing to create a stumbling-block in the way of others. He was to the little society a tower of strength; and God greatly honoured him. He was the central figure in the little society; they rallied round him, and looked up to him as their guide, instructor, and friend. His life was one of prayer; and the same spirit was diffused among the members. He took "everything to God in prayer." It is said he never left home on any business, however trivial or commonplace, without asking for the special blessing of God upon the engagement; the result was, his life was full of rich blessing.

The following interesting incident came to me from an authentic source: "Being a local preacher of most acceptable and useful talents, he went over the wide circuit in which he lived, and was everywhere welcomed by the congregations. At one place his attention had been drawn to a young lady, with whose appearance and spirit he was much impressed. He thought that she would be a most suitable companion for him as his future wife. He determined, however, to follow his usual practice, and take it to God in prayer. The sub-

stance of his appeal to God was, that if this lady was intended, in the order of God's providence, to be his future wife, the next time he saw her she might be clothed in a white dress. He had never seen her dressed in white, but he did not think he was asking too much, in a matter so important, to have this indication given to him of the will of God. The next time he saw the lady was on his next visit to the village to preach, and as he looked round the congregation, he saw her in a white dress. She became his wife, and the result in after-life showed the wisdom of the step he had taken.

The eldest son of their large family settled in Leek, and was a well-known medical man, much esteemed during a long and useful life; he was a successful class-leader, and an influential and useful member of the Wesleyan Society. The other sons settled in Manchester when young, and established a business which has grown to very large proportions.

The first member of this firm of merchants was Mr. John Cooper, a good man, and very highly respected; and the one fact which is deeply interesting to the friends in the little village is, that the daughter of the above-named gentleman has

become the wife of that distinguished Wesleyan minister, the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse. The only remaining member of the family who is still living is Mr. George Cooper, who carries on the business and resides at Macclesfield; he has been a member of the Methodist Church from his youth; he took a lively interest in the building of the Central Hall in Manchester, and contributed some £1,200 towards the cost of its erection.

About the year 1793, the late Mr. John Hambleton was born. His father had shown great sympathy with the Methodists in their early struggles to establish Methodism in the village of Cheddleton, and had opened his hospitable house to them. It is a noteworthy fact that the same house is the home of the preachers still, and has been for at least one hundred years. Mr. John Hambleton was a worthy son of an honoured father. He received a good education in his youth, and was trained by a mother who was one of the excellent of the earth; she was indeed "a mother in Israel," a generous-hearted lady, especially to the poor, and greatly esteemed by all who knew her. After living to a good old age, she died in great peace. Mr. Robert Cooper came from Manchester to preach

her funeral sermon; the congregation was large, and a very powerful impression was produced. The son, Mr. John Hambleton, attended the Methodist services from his childhood. These services had been removed from the house where Mr. Cooper first lived, to an old boat-builder's shop, occupied as a workshop during the week, and a place of worship on the Sunday. It had to be cleared out on the Saturday, and the benches put in order for the Sunday services. The situation of the old building was most inconvenient, and scarcely accessible on dark nights, without considerable risk and danger, from its nearness to the canal; yet the people thankfully availed themselves of the opportunity which this place gave them, of worshipping God, of having "fellowship one with another," and so strengthening each other's hands in all good things. It appears from an old and trustworthy record, now in my possession, that the first Sunday school held in this village was held in the old "dock-house." The following circular was printed and circulated through the neighbourhood:—

“SUNDAY SCHOOL AT CHEDDLETON.

“A convenient room is now fitting up at

Cheddleton for a Sunday school, where children of all descriptions from five years of age and upwards (except those who are afflicted with any contagious distemper) will be instructed to read, and books and every other necessary found them gratis; and in a few weeks, as soon as convenience can be made, and they shall, by regular attendance, proficiency in learning, and exemplary conduct, approve themselves worthy of further instruction, they will be taught to write; and the school will be opened on Sunday, March 1st, 1807; and it is requested that all parents and guardians of children, who intend to send their children, will give information of the same to William Cresswell or Robert Cooper, or attend with their children at eight o'clock on the morning of the day the school is opened. The hours of teaching will be from nine to twelve, and from one to four. The children will be conducted to church on Sunday afternoons as often as convenient. Any well-disposed persons who wish to promote this institution by engaging as teachers, are requested to subscribe their names."

Of this Sunday school at Cheddleton we have but little information. How long it was in active

operation is not known—probably for several years ; but eventually it was closed, and the village was for some years without a Sunday school. The services which were held in this poor old building were very fruitful of good.

Young Mr. John Hambleton had just returned from school ; he was probably about fourteen years old ; he attended the services in the old “dock-house”—that place became to him the house of God and the gate of heaven. He was led as a sinner to the feet of Jesus, and into the kingdom of God. Henceforth, the current of his life was turned into channels of useful service.

The circuit record is : “No one of the many worthies of the past to whom this circuit owes so much, has rendered it greater service, or earned a more general and widespread respect than Mr. Hambleton. He was for fifty-seven years a most useful local preacher ; his sermons were characterised by great excellence, and were eminently practical, aiming at the conversion of sinners and the promotion of true godliness. He was an earnest and judicious class-leader for a very long period, having, it is supposed, succeeded Robert Cooper, when he left Cheddleton for Manchester

in 1829. He was elected circuit steward when about twenty-five years of age, and filled that office many times down to 1856, the last year of his stewardship."

Mr. Hambleton was remarkable for his general intelligence, his sound judgment, his clear views, his Christian consistency. His hospitable home was open to all good people, whether Methodists or otherwise; he was a man of broad sympathies and catholic spirit; he loved and honoured good men of every name; hence he was widely known and highly respected by all. One little incident may here be told. When it was finally decided that I should leave the village, and go away into the large and busy city, he took me aside into a private room, and there among other words of counsel were the following: "Thomas, you are about to leave home, and your lot will be cast among strangers. Get among the people of God, and let me advise you never to be niggardly to the cause of God. I never knew any one to prosper in his soul, who was niggardly to God's cause." It was a word in season, and one that has followed me through life.

In 1849 the present chapel was erected, and Mr. Hambleton was the chief instrument in this work.

He gave the land, and subscribed liberally to the building fund. His interest in the sanctuary and public worship of God was deep and abiding. A letter from his wife, the late Mrs. Hambleton, states that frequently on their return home from the house of God, he would plead with great earnestness and power for the salvation of his neighbours, and for the establishment of God's cause in the village. The end of this good man was in keeping with his blameless and useful life. In his last illness, which was continued for some weeks, he manifested complete resignation to the will of God. I remember distinctly the last hours of his life. I got a letter to say that if I wished to see him alive, I must come without the least loss of time. A coach was sent for, and with hard driving I got to the station, in time to catch the train as it was moving out of the station. My desire was realised; I saw him, and had a few words of recognition. His mind seemed to be dwelling upon the Word of God, with which he had become so familiar. He repeated with great distinctness a beautiful passage from Isa. lxii. : "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God." I think

the last clear utterance which fell from his lips was very impressive; he said slowly, and with great solemnity, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." The words seemed to have a meaning and importance I had never seen in them before. In his life he was on the Rock, and in death he found the Almighty and unchangeable Saviour to be all-sufficient. He apparently went into a quiet and peaceful sleep, and without a groan or even a sigh he passed away to the heavenly home.

It is not known exactly how long the services were held in the old boat-builder's shop, commonly called the "dock-house," but certainly that building was occupied as a place of worship and Sunday school for some years. The "dock-house" was dangerous because of its nearness to the canal, and it is said that certain members of the congregation, returning from one of the services, accidentally fell into the water, and were with difficulty rescued from their perilous situation. In addition to Mr. Hambleton, there were several others who were brought to God and began their Christian career while attending the services held there.

A lady belonging to a highly respectable family

was visiting the late Mrs. Hambleton in 1868, and she stated, that when a young girl she received her first religious impressions at the old "dock-house." Herself and family removed to the neighbourhood of Uttoxeter; she became connected with the Church of England, married, and was known as Mrs. Alice Johnson. This lady consecrated herself, her talents, her all to God, and filled a wide sphere of usefulness for many years. Her name was a household word in the surrounding district, and her works of piety and charity were numerous, and continued through her whole life. Another name connected with the "dock-house" is that of Mrs. George Hughes, who appears to have been converted there. She has been heard in after-years to speak of the delight and joy she realised in the services, both public and social; how she would wrap up her baby in her apron, and carry it a considerable distance rather than be absent from the means of grace. One of her sons was for some years a superintendent of the present Sunday school.

After some years the services were removed to the house occupied by Mr. Cooper and family, only a short distance from the old building, and accessible from the high-road. The front part of this house

was occupied as a shop, and the sitting-room behind the shop was the room in which the Methodists held their services, and many seasons of blessing were realised in that comfortable room.

At this time prayer-meetings and class-meetings were especially attractive, and were often seasons of great power.

My mother lived with the Cooper's family for some years, and remained with them till her marriage. She had a very lively recollection of services held in this house, and also of the preachers who conducted them. One little incident occurred worth recording, because of its humour and drollery. Mr. Kirkpatrick was one of the ministers of the circuit; he had been a soldier, and lost one arm in the service of his country. After his conversion he began to preach, and was soon called to the full work of the ministry. On one of the visits he made to the village, he preached in the sitting-room above described, taking his stand between two sides of bacon suspended from the ceiling. After the service the preacher said to my mother, "You are a young woman, and perhaps some day you may get married; and if ever you have a family of your own, you can tell them that when you

were young and unmarried you heard a man preach a sermon out of a pig's belly." My mother in after years carried out the suggestion, and told the story to her children.





CHAPTER III.

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."—DAN. xii. 3.

THE preaching services were continued at Mr. Cooper's house until 1822, when the first chapel was built. It was a neat and comfortable building, in a central situation, capable of accommodating from ninety to one hundred people. Half the chapel was fitted up with pews, raised one above the other ; and the other end with forms, a large singers' pew, and small pulpit, from which the word of God was proclaimed. The singing was accompanied by several musical instruments, which did good service, according to the skill of the players, though neither the music nor singing can be described as partaking largely of culture or refinement ; and perhaps the highly trained and educated would have considered

this part of the service open to criticism, and polite ears would have been a little shocked at the manner of the performance. They had, however, learned to sing with the spirit; the whole soul was frequently thrown into the songs of the sanctuary, and Wesley's hymns were sung so as to bring down rich blessings on the congregation.

Among the local preachers who came to minister on the Sabbath were men of almost every type. Some young and ardent, some elderly and venerable; some of them were sons of thunder, and some were sons of consolation; some were loud and fiery, and some gentle and subdued in their utterances. But on a plan containing from fifty to sixty names the variety was very great; and I well remember the interest excited by the arrival of the new plan, and what joyful anticipations were awakened as certain names were read over, as appointed to preach during the following quarter. The venerable and devout James Wardle, Esq., came in his carriage, and was specially noted for his reverence and humility. He was a man of lofty religious character, of considerable ability, and of a very benevolent disposition; there was a special charm of goodness about his presence, and we always

expected a good time when Mr. Wardle was planned to preach. We were never disappointed.

Another name was that of Mr. George Bull, of Leek. For many years that name carried with it a mighty influence among the villages of the circuit. Whenever he was appointed, there were great expectations of a general shaking-up among the people; and many signs of spiritual awakening were connected with his ministrations. He was truly one of the "sons of thunder," and his loud and earnest appeals obtained for him the name of the "roaring bull." His was truly an awakening ministry, and there can be no doubt that many will be the "crown of his rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus." I had the following from his own lips:—One Sabbath he was planned to preach at Alstonefield in the afternoon, and Wetton in the evening. In the afternoon service there was great excitement, and towards the close of the sermon, before he had done preaching, a man stood up in the congregation, and exclaimed, "I'll bet any mon five shillings that all Wetton will be converted to-neet!"

Another was Thomas Lea, a gifted old man, much beloved in the circuit, whose name for many

years was very fragrant in the town of Leek. There was also Mr. Thomas Johnson, a druggist, a man of refinement and intelligence, and a very profitable preacher. Also Mr. Thomas Johnson, the painter, an eloquent man, who, while his health was continued to him, was a very popular preacher, whose services were highly appreciated at our village chapel. Mr. Charles Walker must be noticed; he was full of zeal, and very useful; specially noted by a shaking of the head while preaching, which gave a shaking and almost whining tone to his voice. He was, however, as a local preacher, in labours more abundant, and was a welcome visitor to the villages of the circuit.

There were also the three brothers, John, George, and William Heath. The two former lived at Endon, and the latter (Mr. William) at Gratton. John and George were sound and solid preachers of Methodist doctrine, always conscientious and diligent in the discharge of their Sunday duties. William was a man of very superior talents and deep piety. His sermons were clear and lucid, and delivered with great unction and power. He was greatly beloved, both for his personal character and his great ability and zeal. There was also on the

plan at that time Mr. Joseph Finney, a young man with an extraordinary memory. If he had heard the same sermon twice, he could deliver it almost word for word. He was a very interesting and effective preacher, delivered his sermons with quietness and great self-control, was very popular, and much sought after for special services. He was an amiable and unassuming man. Many other names adorned the plan, who blessed the circuit in their day and generation, and have left behind them imperishable memories in the hearts of those they were the means of leading to the Saviour. Perhaps this short notice may give some little, though very imperfect, idea of the work done, and the kind of men who did it.

It appears from the scanty records preserved of these early times that the village was for some years without a Sunday school. After the "dock-house" was left, no suitable place could be found where the work could be carried on. But the desire to do something for the benefit of the children was never entirely absent from the minds of the people. Eventually the way opened, and a Sunday school was commenced in the schoolroom connected with the Church of England. This building was occupied

during the week as a day school, and as the day-school teacher was a member of the Wesleyan Society, it was arranged the Methodists should be allowed to use the room for a Sunday school, on condition the scholars should be taken to church once on the Sunday. This was done for a little while, probably for three years, and then the work of the school came to an end, in consequence of a public attack made upon the Methodists in a sermon preached by the clergyman of the village; the teachers refused to go to church, the work of the Sunday school ceased, and the children were again left without religious instruction. Notwithstanding these unpromising circumstances, some splendid fruit was gathered as the result of the work carried on in that Church of England day school. One striking case must be reported, as it illustrates the beautiful principle so often exemplified in the humblest efforts of Christian people to do good.

In 1874, some thirty years after I came to live in Manchester, an unknown gentleman sent to me several very loving messages through a mutual friend. These messages awakened in my mind a strong wish to know something more of the

gentleman referred to, but several years passed, and no further clue could be obtained. The mystery, however, was eventually solved in the following manner :—

One night a gentleman called at my house (he was staying in Manchester). I was not at home. The following evening I had just got home, when there came a ring at the front-door bell, and a tall intellectual-looking gentleman came in. He said, "You don't know me." I said, "No. Can it be the gentleman who has sent me several very kind messages? Is it Mr. Wood?" He said, "Yes; I have been very wishful to see you for more than thirty years, but have not had the opportunity before." He then said, "You remember the little Sunday school carried on by the Wesleyans in the small day school belonging to the Church of England?" I said, "Yes, very well."

The following is the history of this Mr. Wood, who has been the means of blessing thousands of people during his life. His parents were farmers, and they removed from the neighbourhood of Ipstones, where he was born, to the village of Cheddleton in 1835; he was then about six years old. It appears the family lived at a farm at Cheddleton

Park for about six years, and then removed to Monyash in Derbyshire. It was, however, during his residence in this village as a little boy that he attended the little Sunday school above described. Mr. Wood says: "I began to attend the Sunday school soon after our removal to Cheddleton. The only teachers I remember were you and Mr. S. Warrington; but whether you were teachers or elder scholars when I first attended, and teachers only during the last two or three years of my attendance, I cannot say. It was not the lessons you taught me (I have no recollection of them), but the examples you presented, that influenced me for good—the prayers, the joyful songs of praise, the happy influences which pervaded the school, which gave a brightness and charm to a truly religious life, and awakened a longing in my youthful heart that I might realise the same blessed experience. I used frequently to go into the woods on the hillside, and kneel down and pray that God would make me like you and S. W., who were to me almost more than human beings. It was in these years that the seed was sown and took root, which has produced whatever there may have been good and useful in my subsequent life."

When his parents removed to Monyash, he was about twelve or thirteen years of age; this change was for a time attended with great danger to his spiritual life. Mr. Wood says: "Up to the time of removing from Cheddleton, I doubt not I lived in the Divine favour; I was consciously a child of God, though not recognised as such by the Church. All the week through I anticipated the Sabbath, and going to chapel on Sunday evening to hear some one preach. But after removing I was in a different atmosphere; the teachers at the Church Sunday School were not like my old teachers; the Church services had no attraction for me; the Sabbath was no more a delight. I got companions who led me more or less astray; but the old influences every now and again asserted their power; they were revived by coming with my eldest sister to hear you preach at Longnor. Soon after that I was led by going to a camp-meeting to attend the Primitive Sunday School and other meetings, and under powerful influences of the Good Spirit I at once re-dedicated myself to God, body and soul, for time and eternity." There being no Wesleyans in Monyash (though, strange to say, Dr. Bunting's ancestors lived and his father and

mother were born there), "my lot," says Mr. Wood, "was cast among the Primitive Methodists." He at once became a Sunday-school teacher, before he was seventeen; and, when eighteen years old, he was put on the plan as a local preacher, and as such he soon became widely known. At the age of twenty-one he was called into the work of the ministry; his first appointment was to a very important and responsible circuit in Hull; he spent six months in this circuit before the Conference of 1851, when his probation commenced, and the whole of his four years' probation was spent in the same circuit. He had under his care the largest chapel in the Connexion—a chapel seating fourteen hundred persons; and he certainly was the first young minister who had ever stayed four years in a circuit. His ministry was very fruitful of good; large numbers of persons were brought to God, and great expectations were awakened in the minds of the people as to the future usefulness of the young minister. After his term of probation, he was sent back to another circuit in the town of Hull; from thence he removed to Scarborough, then to South Grimsby, and then again to Hull to his first circuit, then Leeds; and so he was

appointed to the most important circuits in the Connexion, where he was greatly loved and extensively useful.

In 1874 he was released from circuit work, and appointed Connexional Secretary of the Sunday School Union—an office which he held for eight years, greatly to the advantage of Sunday-school work in this country. In 1879 he was elected Secretary of the Conference; and in 1882 he was elected, by a very large vote, to the highest position of honour—the President of the Conference. After this Conference he went back to one of his old circuits in Grimsby, and remained for five years. In 1887 he removed to Nottingham, where his labours were brought to an early termination, by an appointment to be the Governor and Theological Tutor at their College in Manchester. This office is considered the highest and most responsible post in the Connexion. In May 1890, the Wesleyan University, Montreal, conferred upon him the distinction of Doctor of Divinity. He knew nothing of this honour until he received the letter from the Rev. Dr. Shaw, the Secretary of the Senate. Mr. Wood has written a good deal for reviews and magazines; he was Secretary to the Committee

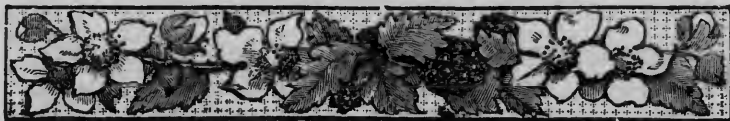
who compiled the new Primitive Methodist Hymnal, and the greatest part of the work was done by him.

Mr. Wood has had a brother and four sisters, all of whom became true Christians. The brother was saved under a sermon preached by Mr. Wood the first time he came home after leaving for the ministry; the conversion of all the rest followed. The brother became an eminently powerful and successful local preacher, and died in great peace and triumph about fifteen years after his conversion. Mr. Wood says, "I look back with much astonishment and profound humility on the way in which the Lord has led me."

In going over so briefly the life of this distinguished man, and comprehending in some degree the extensive usefulness of his devoted and laborious life, and remembering also that Dr. Wood has now a number of young men under his care and tuition who are preparing for the work of the ministry, we cannot fail to be impressed with the operations of the wonderful providence and grace of God. A little boy goes to the Sunday school in a small country village, and while very young comes under the power of the Gospel, and the work is begun in that youthful heart which is destined to lift that little boy in

after-years into a position of honour and usefulness, which shall affect the lives and everlasting destiny of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of immortal beings.





CHAPTER IV.

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go : I will guide thee with Mine eye."—PSALM xxxii. 8.

"If any man serve Me, let him follow Me ; and where I am, there shall also My servant be : if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour."—JOHN xii. 26.

MR. SAMPSON WARRINGTON was born at Cheddleton in 1818. As a youth he was well known in the village as rough and cross-grained, and with decidedly pugilistic tendencies. On Sunday afternoons, and at other times, he went about with lads of a similar class and character, and many a fight and encounter took place. This youth went occasionally to the little Methodist Chapel, and heard the Gospel from the lips of local preachers. He became deeply convinced of sin ; saw the folly and wickedness of his past life ; his godly sorrow was very deep and long-continued ; he drank deeply of the wormwood and the gall ; and very earnestly for six or seven

months, both publicly and privately, he sought forgiveness of sins, determined not to be comforted until he had a clear sense of the forgiving mercy of God. When the change did take place, it was manifest to all; there was no one questioned the reality of his conversion; they might be sceptical about the Bible, but not about the change in this young man. One incident here will illustrate the depth of his religious character. Soon after his conversion, his father observed that the son disappeared about the same time each evening. The father said to him, "Sampson, where do you go to every night?" The son replied, "You can go with me, father, if you like." The father determined to go with him. They walked on out of the village along a quiet lane into a field, then through another field, until they got to a secluded corner, where he took off his hat, and knelt down on the green grass. His father did the same, and then the son offered his evening prayer.

The scene was solemn and touching. They rose from their knees, and returned home without exchanging a word—no doubt both of them under impressions which would follow them for years. The father was the village butcher, and the son

was engaged in his father's business, and much of the village business was done on the Sunday morning. Both were away at the market, some six or seven miles distant, on the Saturday, and returned home late at night; and on the Sunday morning the customers had to be supplied and their orders executed. When this young man got converted, he could not carry out his father's wishes, though anxious to do so. He told his father he was very willing to work until twelve o'clock on Saturday night, and would begin to work at twelve o'clock on Sunday night, but that his conscience would not allow him to do so on Sunday. The result was a very unpleasant conflict with his father. He did not remain at home on the Sunday, but went off to the town, some three miles away, where he could go to the house of God, morning, afternoon, and evening.

At this his father was not pleased, and the relationship became so strained the son had it powerfully impressed upon his mind he ought to leave home. He seemed, like Abraham, to hear a voice from heaven saying, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, into a land I will show thee." So the youth departed, believing that "the Lord had

spoken unto him ; " and in the exercise of faith went forth, like the ancient patriarch, " not knowing whither he went, " but feeling assured that God would as certainly guide him, as he did ancient Israel, by the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. He left his home early in the morning of a bright summer day, and walked nearly thirty miles ; and towards the close of his first day's journey he found himself weary, footsore, hungry. In his distress he would no doubt think of his mother and his home, which he had left under such painful circumstances. What was he now to do, a stranger in a strange country ? Did he think of the young man Jacob, who, owing to unpleasantness at home, had suddenly and secretly to leave his father's house ? Did he, like him, contemplate resting for the night on the cold earth with " the stones for his pillow " ? Whatever were his thoughts, his faith was strong in God, and he would seem to hear a " still small voice " speaking to his inmost soul, saying, " Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land ; " and although he might not see the ladder and the angels, he saw in the moment of his need what

rejoiced his heart exceedingly—a kind, motherly, Christian woman standing at her door. She kindly invited him into her house, supplied all his wants, and provided him with lodgings for the night; and her charges were the same as the ravens' who brought to God's prophet "bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening." He rose early the next morning refreshed and encouraged; and we can imagine him on his knees before God, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God."

With gratitude to his kind hostess he started on his journey. Looking for the guidance of his Heavenly Father, he journeyed on through Manchester and Salford; and on the road to Bolton he overtook some butchers, who were driving cattle from the Salford cattle market.

He got into conversation with one of these men, who was very friendly, and apparently a Christian man. He said to this man, "I have been accustomed to the trade of butcher with my father at home, and should like a situation if I could get

one. Do you know of anybody who wants a youth like me?" The man answered at once, "Yes, I do; I know the very people who have been looking out for a religious youth for the last three months; they have been praying about it. Go to such a number in such a street in Bolton; the name is —. You have only to go there and mention my name, and that's the place for you." He went according to the directions given, found the street and the house, knocked at the door, and the good woman herself opened it; they had no children, only husband and wife. He mentioned the name of this man; she said, "Come in;" he did so, and told his simple story from the beginning to end—how he had left his home, travelled all those miles, and got to that house—and the woman said, "Bless you, my young man! God has sent you here. We have been praying for a young man like you, and God has sent you straight here. Sit down; make yourself at home; we'll be father and mother to you." He cried for joy, and she cried; and they were father and mother to him in a wonderful sense; he had everything he could desire; went to the chapel, to the Sunday school, to the night school; improved himself very rapidly; began to exercise

his gifts as a local preacher. He became very tenderly attached to them and they to him, and he remained with them about two years.

At the end of that time there were sad occurrences taking place at the village he had left. A deadly and destructive fever raged, and those attacked were heads of families in middle life, from thirty-five to forty-five. I think there were eight cases, and all save one died, and left children behind them. The father of this young man recovered, but through his careless conduct in going out immediately he was better the fever returned with redoubled violence. Two of us went from the little chapel on the Sunday evening after the service to see him; we stood by his bedside for about five minutes, and then he "passed away." Intelligence was conveyed to the son at Bolton of the death of his father, and, greatly distressed and broken-hearted, he hastened home to his mother and the family, and made arrangements for the funeral. On that day a large number of people gathered, and many were deeply moved at the sight of this young man who knelt down by the side of the coffin while it stood in the church, his eyes uplifted to heaven, and the tears streaming down his face.

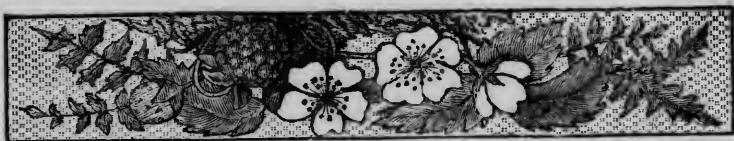
After the funeral was over he took his father's business in hand. His experience at Bolton prepared him for this new responsibility ; he worked hard, he was well supported by the people of the village, and very soon was able to pay off all debts, and place his mother and the children in comfortable circumstances. The family assumed an appearance of decided respectability, and the impression was made upon the neighbourhood that a great change for the better had come over the whole household. As we have seen on a former page, the first Sunday school this young man attended in his native village was not strictly in connection with Methodism ; the teachers were all Methodists, but the school building belonged to the Church, and was occupied as a day school. The Sunday school was suddenly closed, and for many years the village was without one.

In 1847 this young man was the chief means of opening and establishing a Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School on Methodist premises in Cheddleton, and great was his rejoicing when that institution was an established fact. A special blessing has rested on the school, and it is not too much to say that scores of young people have been permanently

benefited by the influences brought to bear upon them in that institution. The following is an incident in his work as a local preacher. One Sunday evening he was preaching in the little chapel in his own native village; he was under the influence of very strong feeling, and at the close of the service said to the congregation how glad he should be if any person had received any good during that service—it would be a great comfort and encouragement to him to know; and he invited any such person to stand up or lift up the hand. An educated young lady instantly put up her hand; that was her time of decision, and henceforth her life was one of singular devotion and piety. She lived two miles and a half from the village of Cheddleton, and was anxious that Methodism should be established in the neighbourhood where she lived. She steadily persevered, until she was the means in the hands of God of building a new chapel. This lady married and became the mother of two children, who are animated by the same unselfish and devoted spirit as that which rendered the mother such a blessing in her day and generation. Sampson Warrington lived to see his brothers and sisters in settled and comfortable

circumstances, and the greater part of them on the way to heaven. He purchased the little estate on which he lived—the house, land, and outbuildings. He married a person of exceptionally good character and devotion ; he had two daughters, and both are members of the Wesleyan Society. He lived to see the work of God prosper, and the members of his family in comfort and respectability, and then in middle life finished his course, and at the age of fifty-one he passed away peacefully to his heavenly home.





CHAPTER V.

"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men."—PROV. xxii. 29.

MR. JOHN T. WARRINGTON, younger brother of Sampson Warrington, was a very shrewd, superior, and clever lad. He had a good business training at a large establishment in the Potteries; but the most important event in his youthful life was his religious decision. The little chapel at Cheddleton and its services became the means of laying the foundation of a character which has carried him through his busy commercial life with credit to himself and usefulness to others; but as this gentleman is still living, I may not say all I could wish to say. As, however, certain statements have been made in the public prints respecting him, I may without hesitation transcribe these, as already public property. The *Northern Counties Grocer's Review* has published

the following interesting account, with an excellent portrait of Mr. Warrington. The writer says: "Mr. John T. Warrington was born in 1826, so that he has now seen a good deal of the ways and dealings of the world, and mixed largely in the great commercial life of our country; notwithstanding which there is no abatement in the physical vigour and business energy which have stood him in such good stead. His birthplace was Cheddleton, a romantic village near Leek, in Staffordshire, where the picturesque was blended with a fair proportion of the life and animation which were to make the career of the then boy. Every day the London coach, with its varying and interesting freight, stopped at the village hostelry, and the bulk of the inhabitants were kept busy by large silk and paper mills and a tannery. His education completed, young Warrington left his native place for the purpose of entering upon an apprenticeship with a firm which was very well known as 'Lockers of Hanley,' carrying on one of the largest wholesale grocery businesses in the north of Staffordshire. The extent of their business may be inferred from the fact that once a week it took some six men and two boys four

hours to count and wrap up the coppers taken during the week, which had to be carted next day to the various manufacturers. At that establishment, in those days, the lowest price for coarse brown sugar, currants, and raisins was tenpence per pound, and soap eightpence, that of other goods in proportion. The activity and spirit displayed, and the volume of trade there carried on, aroused in the apprentice an earnest love of business, and fired his imagination with visions of commercial prosperity and greatness for himself. Soon after the expiration of his apprenticeship, and when he was about twenty-two years of age, Mr. Warrington began business on his own account at Leek, immediately devoting all his personal attention to the English cheese trade. This branch of commerce rapidly developed under his skilled and indefatigable care, and in a few years he was represented by warehouses in Manchester, Birmingham, Macclesfield, and Hanley. About the year 1867, that terror of the farmers, the rinderpest, broke out, with the result that great havoc was wrought among the dairy cows of Cheshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, and other parts of the country. This, of course, had a most damaging effect on English

dairying; and America having just then begun to make and ship cheese, Mr. Warrington gave up the English business, and about twenty-one years ago started upon that career as an importer of American cheese which has made his name so widely known. At first, like many other branches of trade destined in time to assume large proportions, operations in American cheese were small and insignificant; but from his headquarters at Liverpool, and later on from establishments in other parts of the country and abroad, Mr. Warrington, closely identified with all the phases and changes of the business, has seen a wonderful expansion. The quantity and quality of the imports have yearly increased, especially from Canada, the quality of the cheese coming from the Dominion seeming to show continual improvement. It finds great favour with the English trade, owing to its firm, sweet, and keeping qualities. Time was, if a Liverpool merchant sold one thousand cheeses in a week, he was thought to be doing a big business; but it is nothing unusual for Mr. Warrington to sell in London, Liverpool, and other parts of the country twenty to thirty thousand boxes in a single week. In the year 1878 the cheese industries of America and

England were in such a depressed condition that the produce had almost to be given away. At that time he went into the market and bought all the cheese that could be got. This turned the tide in the favour of farmers, and prices rapidly advanced. His business in London, carried on in Tooley Street, under the superintendence of his son Duncan, is the largest in the city. Mr. Warrington has also two sons in Canada—viz., Mr. John T. Warrington, jun., Belleville, Ontario, J.P. for the city of Montreal; and Mr. Frederick H. Warrington, Montreal—who do an extensive export trade direct, besides shipping to their father to Liverpool and London. They have agents in every part of Canada, Illinois, Wisconsin, etc. Mr. Warrington's buyer in New York is Mr. John Orpe, who has been known for over twenty years as the largest shipper from the States, and who naturally is intimately acquainted with all the ramifications of the trade. It is a well-authenticated fact, and a significant one, that Mr. Warrington's cables, sent by ten o'clock in the morning from Liverpool or London to the heads of the departments in New York and Canada will influence the market for a rise or fall in a few hours throughout both England and America. The

firm's red and white rose brand is universally known and appreciated for superior quality and regularity. Calculated, if only occasion served, to render important public services, it is a matter for regret that Mr. Warrington has found it impossible to divorce himself to any extent from business. He takes great interest in religious and philanthropic objects, frequently presiding at large meetings in London, in the provinces, and also in New York. When in Leek he was elected one of the commissioners of that important town, and was for three years a city councillor for Liverpool, but had to resign through pressure of business. He often visits America, and on one occasion addressed about twenty thousand farmers and others on the origin, progress, and future of the American cheese trade. He is a deputy-chairman of the Adelphi Bank. Liverpool and Manchester ; director of the Liverpool and London Globe Marine Insurance Co., the London Imperial Union Accident Co., the Old Silkstone and Dodworth Colliery and Coke Works ; and is interested in shipping and other commercial enterprises. We may add that his fine establishment in London was opened in May 1877, and that he has never had any partners, but has

carried on his immense business by means of his unaided ability."

From the *Weekly Intelligencer*, Belleville, Ontario, Canada, October 1890, I extract an address presented to Mr. Warrington.

"To JOHN T. WARRINGTON, Esq.

"SIR,—The President and members of the Dairymen's Cheese Board of Belleville and district, gladly embrace the present opportunity of expressing the pleasure we feel in welcoming to Canada a gentleman whose commercial acumen and enterprise have so largely contributed to the success of our chief agricultural industry. When the United States Government, some twenty-five years ago, terminated the Reciprocity Treaty, a feeling of apprehension, almost of dismay, pervaded the minds of the farmers of Ontario, who feared the total loss of their American trade, and doubted their ability to compete with other and older nations in the markets of Europe. In this crisis, however, the patriotic intelligence of a few of our countrymen suggested the adoption of the co-operative system of cheese manufacture, already in operation in the United States. A few trial factories were

established, and it was found that our makers could produce an article equal, if not superior, in quality to that of our southern neighbours. In order to place our produce successfully on the English market, and give it that high place in public estimation which its excellency deserves, it was necessary to find an appreciative purchaser, who could recognise its superior quality, and whose high standing in the commercial world would enable him to place it advantageously on the market. Such a patron our dairymen were so fortunate as to find in you, and from the time you took the product of our factories in hand our trade has steadily prospered and expanded, until transactions have reached the present aggregate of millions of pounds and billions of dollars. In addition to those substantial benefits, you have evinced your goodwill towards Canada by establishing two of your sons in permanent positions in this country—one of them resident in this city, who has the honour of being President of the Dairymen's Association of Eastern Ontario; and the other son, Mr. F. H. Warrington, Montreal, who, from all reports, ably fills his position as your representative in that city. In undertaking a voyage across the

Atlantic, and encountering its inconveniences and discomforts, to make our personal acquaintance, you continue to show the great interest you have always shown in the dairy industry of this Canada of ours, and we beg to tender our congratulations on your safe arrival, and sincere wishes for a safe and pleasant voyage. In conclusion, we have only to assure you that we heartily reciprocate the kindly feeling you have manifested towards us in the past, and sincerely hope that our business connections may long continue on the same satisfactory basis as those which exist at present, and that it may be mutually profitable both to you and ourselves."

From the same *Weekly Intelligencer* I copy a report of a "Complimentary Banquet, tendered to John T. Warrington, Esq., of Liverpool, England. A Pleasant Gathering. Intellectual and Patriotic Addresses." The banquet was given by the Board of Trade of the city, and the representative men of the city were present. Alderman L. W. Yeomans, President of the Board, occupied the chair. I select from this report only what has reference to Mr. Warrington.

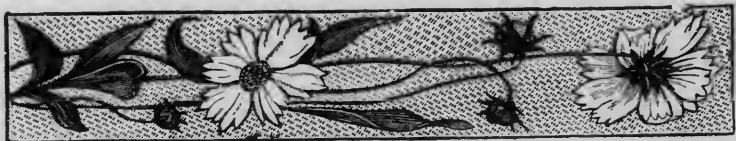
“OUR GUEST.

“‘The right man in the right place! . . . A merchant of great traffic through the world.’—SHAKESPEARE.

“The Chairman, in proposing this toast, stated that he had great pleasure in welcoming Mr. Warrington, the guest, to the city. His representative here was an honoured citizen. He hoped that this would not be the last visit of Mr. Warrington to this place. The cheese industry was one of the many that would connect us more closely with the mother-country. Mr. J. T. Warrington, in rising to respond, was received with loud applause. He thanked them for the enthusiastic manner in which he had been received, and for their display of friendship towards him. He came out to this country and to Belleville to visit his esteemed and honoured son. This was his first visit to this country, and he was more than delighted with what he had seen of it. The air was pure and exhilarating, and the sky above was clear. When in Montreal he saw in the open square a statue of Queen Victoria. He felt he was in a country which would be a staunch and true friend to Great Britain. England was loyal to the great Dominion

of Canada. Her army, navy, and her money would be spent, if necessary, in defence of this beloved Canada. He referred to the inexhaustible stores of wealth here hidden in the earth awaiting a power to unearth them, and it was God's will to raise up men who would unveil these hidden treasures. If Canada wants great business enterprises opened up, she can have untold millions of money. England wants to find a means to invest money safely. We were approaching to a better state of affairs. The world in general was never better than it is to-day. Let all try to find out what they can do to help on this state of affairs. When he returned home, he would expatiate upon the splendour of Canada, and especially of the city of Belleville. He could and would speak of Belleville as a beautiful place. He had dined with the Prince of Wales and other members of the Royal Family, with lords and gentlemen, but he had not found men who were more sociable or intelligent than those who were around the present festive board."





CHAPTER VI.

“Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house : they will be still praising Thee.”—PSALM lxxxiv. 4.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”—JOHN xv. 13.

IN 1849 the present chapel was erected. The chief instrument in this work was the late Mr. John Hambleton, who gave the land and subscribed liberally to the building fund. One of the ministers then stationed in the circuit, the Rev. J. P. Johnson, was the architect, and made plans for the building. The chapel is lighted altogether from the roof. The ceiling, formed of wrought boards and painted, has a pleasant effect. It was opened by the late Rev. Dr. Newton, who stated that “there was nothing like this chapel either in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth.” It is, however, a comfortable place of worship, and has become inexpressibly dear to very many. It is not possible

to say how many wanderers have been brought home to God, how many dark minds have been enlightened and stubborn wills subdued, or how many have been fitted by God's grace for the bright home above, in its services.

Mr. William Walker, now resident at Hanley, was specially benefited in this chapel. He was converted to God in 1861, in his twenty-third year. He writes: "After this I spent some four very happy years at Cheddleton, and received incalculable good from my connection with the society there, and am deeply indebted to many who were, under God, most helpful to me in laying the foundation of such a structure as my life may ultimately become. My Christian character had so far advanced when I left Cheddleton that my name was placed on the plan as a local preacher on trial. The names of Mr. Hambleton and Sampson Warrington are profoundly glorious in my recollection; then come the names of George Steele, Thomas, Andrew, and James Morton, Benjamin Barnett, and others, who welcomed me to the brotherhood, and, as I have said, were made a great blessing to my life. Immediately after I found pardon and peace, I wrote to my brother Sampson, who was in his nineteenth

year, and resided in Wales ; I gave him an account of what God had done for me, of the peace and joy that filled my soul, and how I had found it. In two days after I received a letter from him, stating that as soon as he had read my letter his heart was broken, and he was filled with a sense of his sin and guilt ; he rushed into the garden, and there, prostrate under a tree, wept and prayed, till God spoke pardon and peace to his soul. At that time, and some three years after, he lived among Church people, and lacked the privilege of meeting in class. However, on coming to live at home, he joined the society at Cheddleton ; his connection with which continued for some years, until eventually he left the country, and went to Winnipeg, in Canada. He is a prosperous man of business, an influential Methodist, and holds the office of class-leader and local preacher."

Mr. William Walker continues : "About twelve months after my conversion, my brother Philip came to live at home, and the first Sunday morning I got him to go with me to the Sunday school. On returning home to dinner, finding him labouring under deep conviction for sin, I pressed him to decide at once for God ; he promised that

he would openly seek God at night. That Sunday night God poured out His Spirit in a remarkable manner, and a good number sought mercy, among whom, besides my brother Philip, was Miss M. Steele, who afterwards became his wife; and also Isaac Day, who is a pillar of the cause at Cheddleton; indeed, for a considerable time there was a continuous revival, and numbers of 'souls were added to the Lord.' From the time of his conversion Philip went to work at Milton, a little distance from Hanley. Milton is one of those overgrown villages; it has now become a little town; the inhabitants are chiefly colliers and forgemen; many of them are anything but total abstiners from intoxicating drinks; neither are strikes unknown in the neighbourhood; there is a rough element, which is perceptible on the surface of society; and this was the class of men among whom his life was spent for about twenty years. In this place the name of Philip Walker was a power for good."

His brother writes: "I came a few years after to reside at Milton; I found him most devoted to God and His cause, but he seemed then not to know much of the joy of the Lord, which for

so many years afterwards lighted up his life and shone in his face. We took sweet counsel together, and I think that my residence in Milton was, under God, rendered a permanent blessing to him; for, although he was two years older than I, he looked to me as his spiritual father, and continued to show me deference in all things spiritual to the end. O how sweetly humble he was! He held on his even way, and waxed stronger and stronger; his Christian character ripened in a remarkable manner, and developed in an extraordinary degree. On the death of his leader, Philip was appointed to succeed him as leader of a very large and important class, which office he held till his death. If I had to describe his life in one word, that word would be 'beautiful;' to the common observer there was nothing to detract from it; God had His own way with him, and truly it might be said of him that he 'adorned the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things.' To attempt to analyse his character would only be to disarrange qualities which God had brought together, and blended into a beautiful and harmonious whole. He was engaged at a large works as a refiner of oils, and was considered to be the

best refiner in the district; his master once told a gentleman that 'Philip Walker was the best man in the world.' He had the confidence of all sorts of people, both in the Church and in the world. It is said that if a dispute arose between any of his fellow-workmen, and they failed to convince each other, they would have said, 'Now let us go and hear what Philip Walker says about it; and if Philip says you are right and I am wrong, then I will give in; and if he says that I am right and you are wrong, then you will give in.' 'Yes, I will.' 'Agreed, come on.'"

"He visited the village now and again," says Mr. George Steele, "and we could always feel a powerful spiritual influence accompany him; one of the friends once remarked, 'What a power there is when that man prays!' and indeed there was." This good man witnessed a good confession in his life, and also made a profound impression by the manner of his death; he literally laid down his life to save the life of another. Word was brought from another part of the works that a man was smothering in one of the tar-stills. He instantly ran some fifty yards, climbed on to the still, and, brushing aside the men who were watch-

ing the dying man in he still, said, "Are you going to let the man die?" He instantly descended, and, seizing the man, he began to lift him up, but while he was doing the noble deed he was overpowered with the deadly fumes, and fell helpless on the body of the man he had so heroically attempted to rescue, and, with his arms still round him, he expired before deliverance could be obtained. "Such," says his brother, "was the end of the earthly career of my beloved brother Philip." On the day of the funeral a large number of people were there to pay their last tribute of respect to his memory. Amid great and general regret and sorrow his mortal remains were laid to rest in the little graveyard at Milton. His fellow-workmen, in taking their last look at the familiar face, wept as for a father, and pronounced their simple and affectionate eulogiums. One young man sobbed out, "He was a true friend;" another said, "He was a faithful man—faithful in his class, and faithful everywhere." Many similar expressions fell from the lips of his fellow-workmen, who sincerely mourned the loss of a true friend and brother.

During the progress of the revival to which Mr. William Walker refers another name occurs,

that of Mr. John Mycock, of Ferryhill, who zealously assisted in establishing Methodism in that locality. Mr. Walker writes: "Brought to God within a week of my own conversion, Mr. Mycock at once became an earnest worker for Christ, and was much esteemed by the late Mr. Hambleton. His name appeared on the plan at the same time as mine. At the end of about three years' residence at Cheddleton he removed to Burton-on-Trent, where he has laboured for many years with great acceptance as a local preacher, class-leader, temperance advocate, and in almost every kind of good work. About three years since I went to spend a day or two with him, and found him to be a most consistent Methodist, very active and useful, and widely respected."

Another family ought here to have a passing notice, in consequence of their intimate relation to Methodism in the village more than fifty years ago. The father of the family to which I here allude is Mr. William Bainbridge, who was for a number of years the day-school teacher in the small school belonging to the Church of England, in which the Methodists held their Sunday school for several years. Mr. Bainbridge

was a member of the Wesleyan Society, and rendered good service in leading the choir, occasionally the class and the prayer-meetings. He was a man of intelligence, and of a very friendly disposition; always ready to do a good turn for his neighbours. He had a godly wife. Mr. Bainbridge died many years ago, but his widow lived on until 1886, when she passed away at the age of eighty-two. Her son-in-law, Mr. William Walker, says: "She spent about ten years of her widowhood in my house, where, with the ever-growing infirmities of age, she manifested complete reliance upon God, retained great fervour of spirit, and finished her course with joy, after a membership of more than sixty years."

Of the Bainbridge family there were three daughters at least, and one son. The eldest daughter, Mary, was connected with the society at Cheddleton when young; she was married to a Mr. Woodcock; and, I am told, she led a most blameless Christian life amid many difficulties, and consistently followed in the footsteps of her parents, bearing her humble testimony to the power of the grace of God. Hannah, a younger sister, became the wife of Mr. William Walker, to whom reference

has already been made. He states: "Hannah, the youngest, my first wife, died fourteen months after our marriage, leaving me a most afflicted and desolate widower, with a child two months old. Her end was triumphant. She sang her last testimony a few hours before she departed, in the following significant words:—

‘ Soon shall I learn the exalted strains
Which echo through the heavenly plains,
And emulate with joy unknown
The glowing seraphs round the throne ! ’ ”

The third sister, Matilda, afterwards became the second wife of Mr. Walker, and is still living. He says, concerning them: "These two precious women have, in succession, blessed and adorned my home for twenty-five years, and have done so much to minister to my welfare, and assist me in my toilsome life, that I am often filled with gratitude to God for His precious gifts."

The brother, Mr. William Bainbridge, who is still living, but in very feeble health, was converted at Cheddleton when a youth. The record of his brother-in-law is, that he has led a saintly life, glorifying God, and serving his Church in almost every office with the utmost zeal and diligence.



CHAPTER VII.

‘But go thou and preach the kingdom of God.’—LUKE ix. 60.

THE following is a short account of the Rev. David Roe, whose religious life dates from the little village under consideration. He was born at Stone, in Staffordshire, in the year 1847; his parents were poor, and he had to begin at the bottom of the ladder, having few advantages in early life, and while very young he was sent into the fields to work.

The family removed into the neighbourhood of Cheddleton when he was very young, and those who knew him at that time describe him as a boy full of energy, a ringleader in mischief, often playing tricks with the people in the neighbourhood, and causing considerable sensation and amusement by his practical jokes; his name was well known all around, and doubtless he got the credit for acts of mischief of which he was not really guilty.

He went with other boys to the little Sunday school, and to the services at the chapel ; and when about twelve years of age, he, with several others, decided for Christ during some special services held at a place some little distance from the village. It was the turning-point in his life, and, though he afterwards fell away for a time, yet here the seed was sown which ultimately developed into a life of very extensive usefulness. When sixteen Mr. Roe left England for America, and reached that country with only sixpence in his pocket. He had a praying mother, who told him she should pray for him every day that God would save him and guide him in that distant land.

"One night," says Mr. Roe, "after a pleasant drive, I strolled into a place of worship. I was reminded of my mother's parting words ; it was a revival service, and many were deciding for Christ. I waited a fortnight, all the time under conviction, and then yielded and gave myself to God, and joined the Methodist Episcopal Church of America. At once I saw my need of an education, and, after working hard all the summer and saving all the money I could, I put myself to school in the winter. This I did for four years, and then I began to preach.

One Sunday morning I was sitting in the church when the minister announced that Brother Roe would preach in the evening. That was the first intimation I had of what was expected of me. I spent the afternoon in prayer, preparation, confusion, fear, and trembling, and when the time came I went into the pulpit and preached for twenty minutes. The people were pleased with the effort, but the preacher did not know what kind of deliverance he had made. At the conclusion of the service the minister took my hand, and said, 'Brother Roe, you are evidently called of God to preach, and it is our duty to make arrangements for you to go to college at once.' I objected that I had no money to pay for a college course; but the president wrote to Wyoming College, Pennsylvania, and the answer came back there was a vacancy for a young man. On the following Saturday—within a week of my preaching—I found myself in the College. Here I had to work my way. I rang the bell for the classes, lit the fires, and so on, for which I received board, lodgings, and tuition. I stayed three years. At the end of the first year I was given the charge of a small church which had fallen very low; it was one

built by Bishop Asbury sixty years before. When I went there I had but two sermons, and I preached them both the first Sunday. I had three services a week at the church, and, beside that, had the charge of two mission-places connected with it. After a little while a wonderful revival took place; many hundreds were brought in. In the midst of these revival services we encountered great opposition. I may give one case. I had preached, and at the commencement of the prayer-meeting a man came in, and announced his intention of dragging his wife out by the hair of her head. After a struggle we ejected him, and this task accomplished, although the place was in great confusion, we rallied the people again by singing a hymn,—

‘ Jesus, the name high over all,
In hell or earth or sky;
Angels and men before it fall,
And devils fear and fly.’

We then proceeded with our prayer-meeting, and had a time of power and great blessing. At the close of a year’s work there, the charge was given to a regularly ordained minister, I being left with the two mission-places. At one of these

I succeeded in erecting a church at a cost of two thousand dollars, and conducted a series of successful evangelistic services. What with the strain of the college course, my work, study for the pulpit, and the church building, my health gave way, and I was ordered by the doctors to go to England. I had intended to return immediately after a period of rest to America, but during the time I was in England I accepted some engagements, and one day, after preaching in Staffordshire, I received a letter from the Rev. M. Johnson, Chairman of the Macclesfield District, who I had never heard of before, asking for an interview. I called upon him, expecting to be taken to task for preaching in his district; but after a few commonplace remarks he said, 'I want you to go to Buxton.' I asked, 'What for?' The reply was, 'The minister of the church there is ill, and you must take his place.' I said, 'But I am returning to America.' Mr. Johnson replied, 'You must go to Buxton at once.' At the end of that week I went, and found a handsome new chapel just being roofed in, as well as a circuit to take charge of. When I had been there a few days the minister died, and so for a time I was left in

charge of the circuit. Soon after this I was accepted for the regular work of the ministry, and after two years at Didsbury College was sent to Kington, in Herefordshire. Soon there was a great revival throughout the whole circuit. I left at the end of the year, though pressed to remain longer, and removed to Hereford. There we had a gracious revival, and during my stay a second chapel was built, and a heavy debt on the old one removed. After this I accepted an invitation to travel in a Leeds Circuit, but the Conference did not ratify my engagement, but sent me to Mile End Road. There I found an iron chapel seating three hundred persons, with a congregation of about one-third that number. The work was very heavy; for, in addition to all my other engagements, such as the work in homes of poverty and wretchedness, I built the Lycett Memorial Chapel, at a cost of £10,000, including the price of the land. My next circuit was to St. George's, Limehouse, where I found the chapel dilapidated, and a heavy debt upon it; this we were successful in removing, as well as renovating the chapel and school. From Limehouse I went to Willesden."

I have received the above account from Mr. Roe

himself, and the following is partly from a gentleman who was a member of the church when Mr. Roe was at Willesden:—

When Mr. Roe entered upon his work in this circuit, the cause was in a languishing state. There were a certain number of Wesleyans in the place, and a very handsome chapel, but there seemed very little life about it all, and the organisations—such as they were—were in a very drooping condition; but from the advent of the Rev. David Roe things began to alter, and to alter for the better. The congregation increased, the membership doubled, the Sunday school and various other institutions revived, and several departments of Christian work were added. This change was brought about entirely by the indomitable energy and painstaking care of the new minister, who, in attempting to transform this hitherto languishing church into the success it now is, and in adding the various organisations now to be found in connection with it, set himself an almost herculean task. That he has succeeded, however, is palpable; and although in accordance with the primary rule of Methodism, that its ministers should itinerate, Mr. Roe leaves Willesden,

the splendid work he has done there will be for ever remembered.

It appears from information I have received that, in addition to the greatly enlarged congregations and society, there is an Institute for the benefit of working men, where there are scientific lessons, debates, essays, readings, lectures, social gatherings, besides a number of societies for the promotion of thrift, including a very vigorous temperance society, and a sick benefit society or slate club. In addition there are a very successful mothers' meeting with a membership of sixty, a maternity society, and a penny bank. There is also, in connection with the Institute, a mutual improvement society which meets weekly, and at which papers are read on various subjects, and lectures given. There are seven Bible-classes meeting every Sunday in separate rooms, besides others which meet in the schools. A new mission was commenced in an auction room, which was fitted up as a small mission hall, seating about one hundred and fifty persons. The services were undertaken by the mission band, a very large measure of success attended the efforts put forth, and before Mr. Roe left it grew so rapidly as to

bid fair to grow into a strong Wesleyan Church in a very short time. Mr. Roe is now stationed at Newcastle-on-Tyne, where he is prosecuting the work to which he has devoted his life with the same self-denying application and zeal; he is in the strength and vigour of manhood, and it may be said of him that, whatsoever his hand finds to do, he does it with all his might, and success and prosperity have hitherto invariably attended his efforts.

Mr. Roe writes, referring to the little village of Cheddleton: "Rest assured, I have a very warm place in my heart for the dear old place, and was more pleased than words can express at being permitted to visit the same, and live over again a very important part of my life. That chapel I consider unequalled in Methodism for a country chapel. But the men I knew—pillars in the Church—when I was a boy live still before me; their lives are engraven on memory's imperishable marble; I would emulate them. I refer to Mr. Hambleton, and Mr. S. Warrington, and others younger in the service, but earnest and true. It was there I was first impressed with the dignity and grandeur of the Christian life. Cheddleton may be used as a

typical village church—the cause still struggling, but many of her sons mighty in other parts of the world for the cause of Christ, a real plea for home missions.”

Among the many young men who were led to religious decision were Mr. James and Mr. Andrew Morton, both now residing in Leek. James was sent to the Sunday school when only five years old. He says: “I had very early in life serious religious impressions; often did the Spirit of God strive with me. Mr. John Hambleton and S. Warrington were my teachers, and to them I owe a great deal more than any words can express. There was also the quiet influence of a good mother. The memory of their anxiety and prayers for my conversion often overpowers and fills me with gratitude to God. In course of time there was a movement amongst the lads in the school, and I, with Benjamin Barnett, William Walker, and others, together with my dear departed sister, earnestly sought and found mercy. That period in my life can never be forgotten. I was fourteen, and in the light of mature experience I have no doubt I was soundly converted to God. We had some glorious class-meetings and prayer-meetings, and

often before we separated we sang and prayed together under some hedge. I at once began to try and cultivate my mind, and at the age of seventeen received a note from the superintendent of the circuit to take a little work on the plan, and the following quarterly-meeting I was placed on trial, and in due course became an accredited local preacher."

In 1867 Mr. James Morton left his native village and settled in Leek, where he entered into business with his brother Andrew, and both have attained considerable influence and prosperity in the town. He was appointed leader of the society-class formerly conducted by the late Mr. Charles Walker, and about seven years ago became the conductor of a Bible-class for men, which has grown to large dimensions. Out of this another society-class has been formed, with about twenty members, all earnest workers in the cause of Christ. In this responsible work he says, "Whatever good I may by God's grace have been enabled to do, be it ever so small, the principles from which it all springs were implanted in my heart in the little Sunday school at Cheddleton, and I cannot speak too warmly of the debt of gratitude I owe to God

and His Church for the untold blessing conferred on me in the days of my childhood and youth."

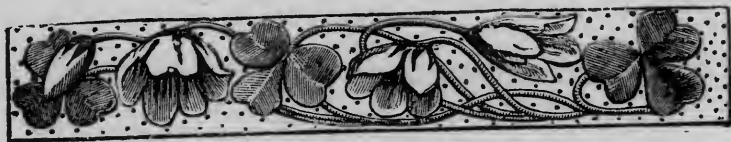
The sister of Mr. Morton, at the age of twelve, became a member of Mrs. Hambleton's class, and always remembered with much grateful feeling the many lessons of instruction and the earnest prayers of Mrs. Hambleton for her spiritual welfare. She is now among those who "came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Among the band of young men brought in about this time was Mr. Benjamin Barnett. He was born in 1841; as a youth he was in danger of becoming wild and irreligious, but the grace of God wrought a complete change in his character, and ever since his conversion he has been an earnest, whole-hearted Christian, and the means of influencing many young people for good. He, like many others, has a very grateful recollection of the little chapel and Sunday school where he was first led into the way of righteousness. He married a daughter of the late Mr. Warrington, and has a large family, several of whom are members of the society, and meeting in their father's class. Mr. Barnett keeps up his connection with his native village, though

three or four miles away, by coming once a quarter to address the scholars in the school.

Another name is that Mr. William Ridley, an excise officer, who was living in the village more than fifty years ago. This gentleman is still living, and over eighty years of age. He writes : " Religious convictions were instilled into my mind by a pious mother, and the influence of kind friends at Cheddleton led me to the cross and the Christ on it. This was my starting-point, and the people forming the society at Cheddleton have been ever dear to me. I am getting near the brink of the river, and will soon have to pass over, but the gentle and loving Shepherd is with me." His life has been a long and useful one, earnestly devoted to the service of his Saviour.





CHAPTER VIII.

“Among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the Word of life.”—PHIL. ii. 15, 16.

THE following is an account I have received from Mr. George Steele, a good and faithful man, who is diligently devoting himself to the work of God in the village. I will give the narrative as much as possible in his own words:—

“My connection with the Wesleyan Methodist Society and Sunday-school at Cheddleton dates back some thirty-four years; during that period I have seen many changes. Looking over an old register, I see a long list of names of persons who have passed through the courts of the Lord’s house. Many of them ‘remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.’ Among those who sleep are the two grand men whose names are inscribed on the beautiful tablets recently fixed

in the chapel. On these two rested the entire management of both chapel and Sunday school as long as they lived. We were many of us ignorant of the funds of the Connexion, though we had occasionally heard about the 'Chapel Fund,' the 'Schools Fund,' the 'Worn-out Ministers' Fund,' etc.; but few amongst us understood the meaning of these funds, and indeed we did not trouble ourselves about such matters, so free from responsibility, so easy and happy did we live under their excellent management. Our knowledge of money matters consisted almost entirely in the 'penny per week' and a 'shilling per quarter.' However, we said to each other, 'Now our leaders are gone we must do the best we can among ourselves.' We could feel a weight coming upon us we had never felt before. In the midst of all our sad thoughts we had the comfort of knowing that Mrs. Hambleton was still left among us, and we considered her to be worth a thousand of us. We had her sound judgment, her large experience, her earnest prayers, as well as her liberal help. Nevertheless, we had our part to act. Some of our people said, 'Now, George, you must be our leader.' I said, 'Nay, I think not; I need a leader myself.' Then one said, 'We

shall have nobody else, so now you know.' I was appointed chapel steward. The premises were getting much out of repair. We had heard nothing about such matters previously, and it seemed strange that anything should be said now. I well remember one dark night, in the autumn of the year in which Mr. Warrington died, six or seven of us stood on what is locally known as 'London Bridge,' near the chapel, talking about our new responsibilities, and how necessary it would be to hold and act together. 'Well,' said one, 'let us have the chapel done up a bit.' Another said, 'It would be a sight better if those old houses were down and the ground cleared, so as to show the chapel all round.' This was very large talk, and sounded very strange, seeing that to our knowledge such things had never been named by our predecessors, and more strange still because we were all working men; but the talk went on for some time, and we all became deeply interested; it did feel that the thing was to us becoming a reality. I said to my friends, 'But what is the good of talking like this? we are only working men.'

"Now I will tell you what we did—or, rather, I will tell you what we did not do. We did not say,

‘Let us go and ask this gentleman or that lady for a subscription to start with. No—no such thing was named. There was in that little company a man who was a very splendid type of a British workman; he stretched himself to his full height, put his hands in his pockets, and said, ‘I tell you what, George; I have saved £20 the last twelve months, and I will give £5.’ It was to us a startling announcement. Then another said, ‘I will give £5’; then another said, ‘I will give £4’; and another £3, another £2, and another £1: ‘Every man according as he purposed in his heart.’ These were no piecrust promises, made to be broken; every penny of that money was paid at the time agreed upon. The ‘London Bridge’ meeting was a remarkable one, and resulted in the removal of the old cottages, which were a great eyesore; and some other needed improvements were made.

“While the work was going on, we were not without our ‘Sanballat and Tobiah.’ It grieved some exceedingly to find that there were certain men left who had the cause of Methodism at heart. Certain people had said that Methodism would live as long as Mr. Hambleton, and then——; and when they saw that it still survived, they said it would

live as long as Mr. Warrington lived, and then—— ; but when they saw these poor men carrying on the work, they were much disappointed, and when a storeroom was being made under the chapel, one of these men said he should like to see a barrel of gunpowder put under the floor of the chapel ; but notwithstanding these ill-natured words and feelings the work was finished, the chapel was reopened, with large congregations, and has since been the birthplace of many souls.

‘The gates of hell shall not prevail ;
The Church on earth can never fail.’

“About twelve years ago we had a remarkable revival ; the whole village and neighbourhood seemed moved by the Spirit of God. We were holding our special prayer-meetings at the commencement of the new year. Instead of closing our meetings at the end of one week, which was our usual custom, we continued them every night for three weeks ; the interest in the meetings deepened, and the number attending increased, until there was an average of sixty to seventy, almost filling the schoolroom. Many strangers came to the meetings, and some of the most unlikely people, who had never been seen at the chapel before.

We gave short and pointed addresses, a good deal of lively singing and short earnest prayers, and though there was snow on the ground all the time the meetings were held, yet there was some one or more fresh every night. The people came from every quarter ; it was noised all about the country ; a goodly number were saved, and are now 'fearing God and working righteousness.' It was one of God's special times for doing special work. We had no minister with us ; we were all plain people, but we were terribly in earnest. God took away our leaders, but He carries on His work. Since they went to heaven many have been saved, and we still have a band of earnest men and women, whose hearts the Lord has touched. I am happy to say that there is health and life and peace amongst us. 'Our sons are as plants grown up in their youth, and our daughters as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace.'

"There is doubtless a future for Methodism at Cheddleton ; about this I have the utmost assurance, and generations yet unborn shall rise up and call Him blessed, and

'Children's children ever find
His word of promise sure.'

“True, as you have told us, Methodism in this place is one hundred years old, and yet ‘its eye is not dim, nor its natural force abated.’ We have some good people among us, who have done good service in a quiet way. The following are the names of families that stand by our cause now: the Hodgkisses, Mortons, Sarjeants, Mitchels, Maydews, Wains, Days, Turners, Bishops, Warringtons, and others. Speaking for myself, as I look back I see many green spots where the pasture has been sweet and refreshing; and as I look forward I feel assured of the ‘goodness and mercy that shall follow me all the days of my life.’

“When I have thought of leaving Cheddleton, the conviction has been so strong that I ought to stay, that I almost fancied some hand was on my shoulder, and a voice saying, ‘This is the way; walk thou in it.’ Many a time, when I have been at work in the garden, I have heard ‘the still small voice’ speaking to me in unmistakable language, ‘I will be with thee; I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.’”





CHAPTER IX.

"She hath done what she could."—MARK xiv. 6.

"A woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands ; and let her own works praise her in the gates."—PROV. xxxi. 30, 31.

THE next little history and life I wish to sketch is that of the late Mrs. Sarah Hambleton. During the time these sketches were being prepared she lingered in great weakness, waiting for the coming of her Lord. Since the Centenary Celebration of Methodism at Cheddleton, she has "fallen asleep," and is at rest, and her works do follow her. Her memory is very precious to the writer, who in his early boyhood, and through the whole of a busy life, has felt the influence and power of her godly life.

Mrs. Hambleton was born at a farm called High Street, about a mile and a half from Cheadle, on June 1st, 1810, and was in her eighty-first year at the time of her death. I fear little is known of her early life. The family attended the

services at the Parish Church at Kingsley. She belonged to a family of eight—four brothers and four sisters; and when she was very young they lost their mother. After her mother's death her Aunt Hope came to reside with them, and acted the part of a true mother, training the children wisely and well. Mrs. Hambleton often spoke in the highest terms of her aunt, and regarded her with warm affection. As a child she was often under serious impressions, and in going and returning from Kingsley Church she always avoided light, giddy, or trifling conversation. She would rather return home in silence, and retire into solitude to think over what she had heard. I believe Mrs. Hambleton was the first in the family to enter upon a religious life. She went to visit a relative in Manchester, who was a good, earnest Methodist. During her visit she heard some of the leading Wesleyan ministers, and was so impressed and convinced of her need of salvation she resolved to be a Christian. She does not appear to have passed through such painful and agonising experiences as some of God's people, but her conversion was like that of Lydia, whose "heart the Lord opened." She was drawn and won by the mani-

festation of God's love as revealed in Christ, and led to the exercise of that faith which brought her the assurance of acceptance with God—"the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins."

In early life the family came to reside at Whiston, and at that early date there were a few godly Methodists in that village; so, with other young people, herself and sister went to hear the Methodist preachers, when the services were held in private houses. The late Mr. Smith, of Whiston, was the leader of the class, and she and her sister joined it soon after her return from Manchester. From the first she made it a rule to pray in secret before going to the meeting, and on one occasion she had a deep impression made upon her mind she should find peace with God at the meeting to which she was going. The blessing came, and she rejoiced in the knowledge of Divine forgiveness, and the sweet assurance she had passed into the glorious light and liberty of the children of God. The genuineness of her conversion was abundantly evidenced by a long life of loving service rendered to her loving Lord. After her conversion she longed for the salvation of her brothers and sisters. She had it impressed upon her mind that they ought

as a family to have a family altar and to worship God together ; she went through an inward struggle about this matter, and was persuaded the Spirit of God was showing her the path of duty. One night, as they all sat round the hearth, without saying a word to any one she went and fetched the Bible and read a chapter aloud, and then they all knelt down, and she prayed. In speaking to a friend many years after about this first family prayer, she said the struggle with her feelings was so great she had to grasp the chair to steady herself, and she could not remember one word she said. The effect upon the family was remarkable ; they were so surprised they seemed to be speechless.

Very soon after this her sister Caroline was soundly converted to God. The change in these two sisters was deep and abiding, and in each case resulted in a life of rare devotion to God. Miss Caroline Hall was distinguished for strength of mind, general intelligence, and saintliness of character. She was married to the Rev. Josiah Mycock, who went out from the Leek Circuit, and together they went as Wesleyan missionaries to Western Africa. The climate had acquired the name of the "white man's grave," but she did not hesitate to go

at the call of God. For three years they laboured there, and then returned to England with broken health, and, though she lived a few years after her return, the seeds of disease were sown in her constitution, which resulted in her comparatively early death. Between these two sisters, Sarah and Caroline, there existed a strong affection, and the influence of the two was soon seen on the other brothers and sisters. One after the other were brought under the saving power of the Gospel. The four brothers and four sisters sat side by side, not only at the public services, but also in the class-meeting, and it is said they were all most regular in their attendance.

Truly a beautiful sight—four young men and four young women, brothers and sisters, all so sweetly united in Christian fellowship. Her influence over her family and relatives, however distant the relationship, was very remarkable. Her aim and desire was to see them all soundly converted to God, and she judiciously used every means likely to influence them in the right direction. Each and all had an interest in her prayers, and the power she unconsciously wielded in this way was wonderful. All felt the influence of her

beautiful life and her faithful and loving words. The same may be said of her influence over those who were in the service of her family, either inside or outside the house ; there was the same earnest desire to lead every one to the Saviour, and this spirit extended, more or less, to the whole village and neighbourhood, and the result is known in the number of people who have been led by her influence and prayers into the kingdom of God. It is now about fifty years since she came to Cheddleton as the wife of the late Mr. Hambleton, and it is impossible to imagine the blessings that have come to the village as the direct result of her influence and example.

Some time before her marriage she had a severe attack of small-pox, which threatened to terminate her earthly life. During this illness she had a longing desire to die, and was greatly disappointed when she began to recover. She desired "to be with Christ, which is far better." She felt reprovèd one day by finding a stray leaf from the hymn-book, with the hymn beginning,—

"How happy, gracious Lord ! are we,
Divinely drawn to follow Thee,
Whose hours divided are

Betwixt the mount and multitude ;
 Our day is spent in doing good,
 Our night in praise and prayer."

And especially the second verse, as follows :—

 " With us no melancholy void,
 No period lingers unemployed,
 Or unimproved, below ;
 Our weariness of life is gone
 Who live to serve our God alone,
 And only Thee to know."

From that time she saw more clearly than before the true value of life, when directed to right ends. Soon after she came to reside in the village she had an affection in one of her eyes, and serious reasons for fearing she would lose her sight. She, as usual, made it a matter of special prayer, and in that blessed exercise found her will sweetly lost in the will of God, and content and satisfied if that will should lead to the loss of her sight. After she had received power to cheerfully submit to the Divine will, something like a scale came off her eye, and her sight and eye were completely restored. Whatever may be thought of this incident, she took it as a direct answer to prayer, and an answer given when her own will was lost in God's

will. The great lesson she learnt was—in all our temporal concerns, while we pray, we must submit to be guided by His infinite wisdom and goodness, expressed by the poet in the hymn,—

“ Leave to His sovereign sway
To choose and to command;
So shalt thou wondering own His way,
How wise, how strong His hand ! ”

Another example of her intense desire for the salvation of all those residing in her house I give from two letters written to one with whom she was in frequent correspondence :—

“ Our blessed Saviour tells us ‘ there is joy in the presence of the angels of God,’ etc. ; it is therefore meet and right that there should be joy among the saints of God on earth over a new-born soul. I know you will rejoice with me when I tell you that a member of our household has given his heart to God, and chosen the Lord for his portion. As far as outward evidence goes I have no reason to doubt the reality of the work. You may readily conceive how happy I am to have another in our house on the ‘ Lord’s side ; ’ and I must needs tell you that you have something to do with his prompt

confession of his Saviour ; for as soon as I gave him your letter to read (the one written just after your birthday) almost as soon as he began to read, his voice faltered, and tears came into his eyes ; and when he read of your resolve being made known the same night, and the advantages you derived from it, he expressed a wish to go to the meeting that night ; and go he did, and he went again last Thursday. I hope and pray that he may be a stable and faithful follower of the Lord Jesus."

Again : "I give thanks to God, on your behalf, for your well-being both of body and soul. What a kind and gracious God we have to deal with ! Truly my soul doth rejoice in God my Saviour ; He is all my salvation and all my desire. My prayer is that the Divine will may be accomplished in me, and that I may glorify God in life and in death. May you and I give to God all our hearts' affections, and sink fully into His will, or we shall keep ebbing and flowing just as circumstances may fall out to grieve or comfort us ; now, this is being on the wave instead of on the Rock ; but when our heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, we shall see His hand in everything, painful and

pleasant, and feel assured that all will work together for our good. I strove to begin this new year with a renewed consecration of myself to God, and I have experienced very special seasons with God in private communion. We have had a special prayer-meeting in the schoolroom every night for two entire weeks. These meetings were well attended, especially by the members; and God was with us of a truth. There has been much powerful pleading with God for the conversion of sinners; and I trust some good is done. My own two maids, Mary and Annie, give evidence of a change of heart, and very willingly went with me to class on Monday night."

The following incident was told me by herself. She was urged to go and see a person in a public-house who was ill and likely to die, and one known to have bitterly opposed the work of God among the Methodists. She shrank very much from the task of going to a public-house; it was a trial to her, but she determined to go. As she got to the stile leading out of the meadow into the road, she came up to a spectral appearance which stood in the way. She hesitated, and thought of going back, and then said, "No, I

will go in the name of the Lord." She drew her skirt on one side, and went over the stile, and on to the house. A special blessing attended this visit, and Mrs. Hambleton had most satisfactory evidence that the person, who shortly afterwards passed away, was saved, and went to heaven. I make no comment on this occurrence, but give it as related to me. She was as far removed from superstition as any lady I have ever known; she always regarded it as a supernatural appearance. I must leave the reader to form his own opinion of the matter.

I must mention another fact with which Mrs. Hambleton's name is associated, though it occurred about fifty years ago; it is a precious memory to a few, and has had a mighty influence over the lives of a large number of people in and around the village. Three persons connected with the society (Mrs. Hambleton one of the three) agreed to spend half an hour before each service was held, and pray for a special blessing to rest upon that service, whether a preaching service, class or prayer-meeting. This was faithfully carried out, and the result was wonderful. The congregations were crowded; the

ministers mightily assisted; prayer and class-meetings full of heavenly influence and power; conversions became numerous, and the work spread with great rapidity; and one remarkable feature of the revival was, that people were powerfully wrought upon who had never been to the chapel. A large number of persons were brought to a blessed experience of true religion, and the Church was permanently enlarged.

I have a number of letters in my possession, all of which breathe an earnest longing for the salvation of sinners; and those who lived in her home bear testimony to the same characteristic in her life.

Mrs. Steele writes: "I have lived under the same roof with her for nearly sixteen years, and we have been together, more or less, for thirty-seven years. I had the honour of helping her up from her knees the last time she knelt in prayer; and she rested on my arm when going to and from the communion rail the last time she received the Sacrament at the chapel. Several of the first years she spent with us were, I think, among the happiest of her life. Rich in a matured Christian experience, relieved of business and household cares, she gave herself

and her time more fully to God and to His cause, which was inexpressibly dear to her. She spent much of her time in reading God's Word and other good books, and in private prayer. She loved to read the hymns in our precious hymn-book, which are so richly stored with scriptural and experimental truths, and often kept it open before her on the table.

"In her private devotions it was her custom to pray for each family in the village, her class-members, her Sunday-school class, her family and relatives, each by name. When unable to go to the meetings at night, she would go early to bed, and wish to be left quite alone, that in spirit she might go through the service, and on our return was always wishful to know who were there, and if the meeting had been a profitable one. She lived for the people of the village, and said it was the dearest place on earth."

Mr. Steele writes: "I consider it the greatest privilege of my life that I ever knew Mrs. Hambleton. I worshipped in the same chapel for more than thirty years. I have seen her under various circumstances; her life was so saintly and Christ-like, such a harmonious whole, I could not pick a

bit here and a bit there without spoiling it. I have read the lives of good men and women printed in books, but I have seen with my own eyes practical godliness carried out in the life of Mrs. Hambleton day by day. I may truly say, 'Her like I never knew.'

Her faithful attendant, Miss Bracegirdle, writes: "I have known Mrs. Hambleton for nearly five years, having been her nurse for that time, and to know her was to love her. A great deal was expressed in a quaint remark made by a minister; he said, 'Mrs. Hambleton was one of the few good women I am not afraid of.' Her deep piety was real and practical, making itself felt when little was said. She sought first 'the kingdom of God, and His righteousness.' She was neither sanctimonious nor sentimental. Many pleasant memories are called up when I think of the books we read together; a good stirring biography she always enjoyed, such as 'Lord Shaftesbury' or 'Bishop Hannington;' but she had no taste for what was unreal and fanciful. I well remember beginning to read a chapter on angels out of a book lent to us, and on looking up to see the effect it was producing, she said with

a very expressive face, 'I'm in pain now, and if you read that much longer I shall be worse.' Her love for the ministers of the Gospel and her delight in their company were very great, and nothing grieved her more than to hear them lightly spoken of. The class-meeting she highly valued, and I have heard her say, 'But for that means of grace I should have lost my religion.'"

The last few years of waiting, Mrs. Hambleton has been pre-eminently bright and cheerful and patient. The doctor remarked she was the brightest patient he had, for she always met him with a smile. A few weeks before she passed away she said, "I feel more and more thankful that salvation is of grace and not of works," and several times she repeated,—

"I dwell for ever on His heart
For ever He on mine."

Among Mrs. Hambleton's papers I found "Special Subjects for Prayer," which I believe she kept up as long as concentration of thought lasted.

"*Sunday.* — For Sabbath-school instruction, ministers of the Gospel, all agencies that are at work for the spread of the Word.

• *Monday*.—Prayer for Bible societies, missionary societies, benevolent institutions, temperance societies.

“*Tuesday*.—Prayer for our country and for Ireland, for ministers of the Gospel to be endued with power from on high.

“*Wednesday*.—Prayer for my own family circle.

“*Thursday*.—For the members of my own class and our society.

“*Friday*.—For the spiritual prosperity of my own village and neighbourhood.

“*Saturday*.—Prayer for the blessing of God on the coming Sabbath, on the universal Church.”

Many years ago a young girl in her Sunday-school class was led through her influence to Jesus, and became a decided Christian. Between the teacher and the pupil there sprang up a special and tender attachment, which continued to the end; and their intercourse was of a most spiritual and heavenly character. The pupil writes: “I believe I owe more than I can ever know in this life to our dear and faithful friend. Many were the sweet lessons she taught me from the Word of God and her own experience. She taught me to act in accordance with the gracious impressions I

had received, and declare myself drawn to love and serve God; to cherish a love to the house of prayer, and strive earnestly so to manage my affairs as to be able to go to meetings for prayer, praise, and fellowship with the people of God. She taught me to value life, so that I might serve God; to fear to do anything in my daily life which would in any way dishonour my Christian profession, but strive rather 'to adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour in all things.' She specially exhorted me to 'serve the Lord with gladness.' Soon after I had yielded to the gracious influences of the Spirit of God, she asked me to spend a short time, between morning and afternoon school, alone with God, to read a few verses kneeling, and to strive to lay claim to the promises, and believe God was speaking to me by His written Word. Thus early the habit of reading and private prayer was formed. This true 'mother in Israel' showed me the meaning of a scriptural fast, and led me to seek for the true spirit of fasting taught in the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah. She believed it was good sometimes for the health of the body, but observed so as not to attract the attention of those about us, as the Saviour directed, 'That ye appear

not to men to fast,' but to humble ourselves before God. These and similar instructions were given on all the points of experimental and practical religion."

The last few months of her life were spent in great feebleness of body, amidst the beautiful surroundings of her nephew's home at Leek. Here she had every attention loving hearts could suggest and willing hands could supply, and all was done to soothe and comfort her as she passed down into "the valley and shadow of death." With little suffering, except that of weakness, she gradually sank into the sleep which will have no waking, until the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised. Meantime, her sanctified spirit has gone to

"The City so holy and clean,
No sorrow can breathe in the air,
No cloud of affliction or sin,
No shadow of evil is there!"

This little sketch would not be complete without a little of my own personal experience, and an expression of my obligation to God for giving me her friendship and a long and lasting interest in her prayers. For fifty years I have known

Mrs. Hambleton. Soon after she came to reside at Cheddleton, I was led to unite myself with the society, as a youth about sixteen. Her great kindness commenced by suggesting books it would be profitable for me to read, giving me the most valuable advice, and the benefit of her deep religious experience. She consented most cheerfully to remember me every day at the throne of grace, telling me the hour of the day, in order that I might be drawn into the same exercise at the same time.

The following incident I give, after some hesitation, because it was to me a time never to be forgotten. I was about eighteen, and at work with several men, about two miles away from home, and at the dinner hour, the time I looked upon as sacred, I left the company of the men, took a walk into a field where I could be alone, and began to meditate and pray ; and suddenly it seemed as if the heavens were opened, and my whole soul was overwhelmed with a sense of the light and love of God. I could hardly tell whether I was on earth or in heaven. My experience was—

“The opening heavens around me shine
With beams of sacred bliss.”

Everything around me seemed almost transfigured; and this fact was remarkable—I felt absolutely certain this wonderful manifestation was in answer to the prayers of my dear friend. I went in the evening to inquire, and I got this reply to my question, “Yes, I was particularly drawn out when pleading with God for you.” The effect of that great blessing has been to encourage me on many occasions, amidst the conflicts and labours of a busy life. Her name and the memory of her devoted life are very precious in the village, where she has shed the lustre of a quiet but heavenly life on the whole neighbourhood for more than fifty years. Those ministers and others who have had the privilege of being entertained at her happy and peaceful home will remember with gratitude and joy the heavenly influences of that home, and the sweet and refreshing seasons of Christian fellowship enjoyed, reminding us powerfully of the home at Bethany, where dwelt “Martha and her sister and Lazarus.” In her own home Mrs. Hambleton had an influence which has greatly strengthened and stimulated many of the servants of God in their “work of faith and labour of love,” and eternity alone will reveal the extent of that

influence, direct and indirect, which has contributed to extend and build up "the kingdom of God."

Mrs. Hambleton's death occurred on January 22nd, 1891. She was interred at Cheddleton. A long procession of almost the entire congregation, the teachers and scholars from the Sunday school, and other friends, met the funeral party half a mile away from the village, all in mourning dress. The kind and friendly vicar, with two of the ministers of the circuit, took part in the service, both in the church and at the grave.

On February 22nd a memorial service was held in the chapel at Cheddleton, when a crowded congregation assembled. Old friends came from a considerable distance, and many testimonies were given to the blessed influence of the life and work of the departed one. The service was conducted by the writer of this book; and many remembered that twenty-four years before, the funeral service of the late Mr. John Hambleton was conducted in the same place and by the same preacher.





CHAPTER X.

“When He first the work began,
Small and feeble was His day :
Now the Word doth swiftly run,
Now it wins its widening way :
More and more it spreads and grows,
Ever mighty to prevail ;
Sin’s strongholds it now o’erthrows,
Shakes the trembling gates of hell.

“Sons of God, your Saviour praise !
He the door hath open’d wide ;
He hath given the Word of grace,
Jesu’s Word is glorified :
Jesus, mighty to redeem,
He alone the work hath wrought ;
Worthy is the work of Him,
Him Who spake a world from nought.”

Hymn 218, WESLEY.

THE CENTENARY CELEBRATION.



HE following is a brief account of the Centenary Celebration of Wesleyan Methodism in this village.

The chapel and school required a thorough repairing inside and outside. Painting and decorations were necessary in order to make the little sanctuary comfortable and attractive, and it was found that the heating of the chapel was insufficient and objectionable.

Three gentlemen (two of whom were born in the village, and the third lives in the circuit town, and takes a great interest in the villages in the circuit) consulted with the good friends on the spot as to what it was desirable to do, and as they talked together they came to the conclusion it would be a pleasant task to take the matter thoroughly in hand, and renew the place internally. They decided to put in a new hot-water heating apparatus; to take out the old pulpit, pews, and benches; to fit up the chapel with pitch-pine pews and benches, and a pretty and effective rostrum and communion rail, with French polished mouldings and newels; new pitch-pine benches for school; lamps for chapel and school. The roof and outside of the buildings were repaired, and the premises painted inside and outside. Two beautiful marble tablets were placed inside, on the wall of the chapel, to the

memory of Mr. John Hambleton and Mr. Sampson Warrington.

The entire amount expended was upwards of £300. The three gentlemen above mentioned made themselves responsible for all expenditure; at the same time, the friends in the village did their share nobly and generously, and in every way threw themselves enthusiastically into the movement.

After this work had been determined upon, it was discovered that Methodism had been established in the place about one hundred years, and hence it became a Centenary Celebration.

Arrangements were made some four or five months beforehand for the reopening of the chapel on March 30th, 1890, and the following Sunday, April 6th, which was Easter Sunday. These services were conducted by ministers who were directly or indirectly connected with the village.

The first Sunday named two sermons were preached to large congregations by the Rev. Joseph Wood, D.D., Primitive Methodist minister. The sermons were able expositions, and were very powerfully applied. The day and the services will long be remembered by those who were present.

On the following Sunday there was a children's service in the morning, conducted by Mr. J. T. Warrington and the writer of this book, both formerly Cheddleton boys. In the afternoon a very striking and impressive discourse was preached by the Rev. David Roe, a sketch of whose life is given in a former chapter. In the evening a sermon worthy of the occasion, as well as the reputation of the preacher, was delivered by the Rev. George Bowden, Governor of Kingswood School, and brother-in-law to the writer of this account.

On Easter Monday, April 7th, a great gathering of old friends from a distance took place; they came from Leek, the Pottery towns, Stockport, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Sheffield, as well as from a number of villages round. The gathering was such as had never before been seen in the village, and probably will never be seen again. An interesting incident ought to be told. The young men of the village caught the enthusiasm, and determined to form a brass band, and if possible make themselves capable of playing at the great gathering of friends. They secured the instruments, and obtained the services of a gentleman in the Potteries, who gave them the needful instruc-

tion, and with constant and persevering practice they were able to do themselves great credit, as well as minister to the success of the day; they also provided themselves with a uniform, which added to the effect.

It had been determined to have a procession through the village; and about three o'clock in the afternoon the friends gathered in large numbers. The band went at the head of the procession, followed by seven ministers and about three hundred friends. The first halt was made opposite the cottage where the Methodists first found a shelter from the rain and cold to which they had been exposed in the open air. A circle was formed, and the Doxology heartily and feelingly sung. They moved on to a point where the old boat-builder's shop and the second house mentioned in a former chapter in this account could both be seen, and at this second halting-place another grateful song rose from many hearts. The procession then marched back to the open space in front of the chapel, where a large addition had been made to the numbers assembled, and the Rev. F. Haines, superintendent of the circuit, gave out several verses of the hymn,—

"All hail the power of Jesu's name :
Let angels prostrate fall ;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all."

The singing here was particularly hearty and joyful.

The friends then proceeded to the National School, where tea was provided, and it is very pleasant to record that the vicar of the parish and the managers of the school had, in the kindest manner, not only put the school at our disposal, but freely offered us the use of urns, crockery, and every other requisite they possessed for our comfort. The school was crowded, and nearly five hundred persons sat down to tea. The public meeting after was held in the chapel ; and as the schoolroom opens into the chapel by means of folding-doors, it was estimated three hundred people were present, besides an overflow meeting at the National School. Mr. T. Willshaw took the chair, and deeply interesting addresses were given by the superintendent of the circuit ; Mr. John T. Warrington, of Liverpool ; Rev. H. L. Yorke, son-in-law to Mr. Warrington ; Rev. David Roe, of Newcastle-on-Tyne ; Mr. John Hall, of Leek ; and the Rev. George Bowden, of Kingswood School,

Bath. Many reminiscences of olden times were brought out during the evening ; while Mrs. Wain at the harmonium and the village choir did excellent service, and ministered to the joyfulness of the occasion.

A long and interesting account appeared in the *Leek Times*, from which it appears that some interesting facts connected with the establishment of Methodism in the village were given by the chairman. The meeting was afterwards addressed by Mr. J. T. Warrington, of Liverpool, who was received by the meeting with great cordiality. He said it was with no ordinary feelings he stood before them that night. He could not enter the sanctuary of his native village without having his thoughts thrown back to his early childhood and youth. He had spent only about thirteen years of his life at Cheddleton, and those years were not spent in mastering the classic languages nor in reading classic literature ; neither were they spent in the study of Algebra and Euclid ; but they were spent principally in rambling about the fields, climbing the trees, or fishing along the canal, racing and jumping with the other boys of the village. In those days he had no definite ideas of the world ;

everything in his mind was dormant until he entered that small chapel. Then the Spirit of God touched his heart, and his mind instantly underwent a complete and perfect change. He looked out into the world, which seemed brighter to him; the fields, the flowers, the hills, and valleys seemed different, and visions of pleasure seemed to open before him everywhere. Not only visions of pleasure, but visions perhaps faint and indistinct of future usefulness, and perhaps of happiness and power, flashed across his mind. He hoped he should not be considered egotistic; he was simply speaking the thoughts of his youthful mind about the future. To obtain the position he had done, he could not rely on education, friends, influence, or money. He had, in fact, to depend entirely upon himself. His reliance upon the blessing of God upon what he did he always found sufficient to bear him up. In youth and early manhood they looked forward into the future with hope and anticipation, and it was well for young men and maidens to look joyfully forward to the possibilities of a pleasant and successful career. As they advanced in life, when they had passed fifty years of age, and were getting on towards

sixty, their chief pleasure was in living in the past. They dwelt in their thoughts upon every incident of interest in their past career. They had lived long enough to see what the world was, and what it could do for them. If they had attained influence and social status and wealth, they found that a man's life was not worth living merely for wealth and position.

In coming back to Cheddleton, his thoughts were all thrown back to his early days. It was not only a centenary celebration, but to him it was also a jubilee. It was fifty years about that month since he left his widowed mother's home to seek his fortune. He remembered his thoughts as he crossed the little brook, with his staff in his hand. Although it was fifty years ago, it was as fresh in his memory as if it was last year. During that fifty years he had had a great deal of experience of the world. He had travelled very great distances ; he had stood upon the dome of St. Peter's at Rome, had mounted the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and had visited the Falls of Niagara ; he had addressed mighty meetings in America and England ; but all these things gave way in his thought while recalling the many incidents of his

childhood. King David was once a boy; he lived in the fields of Bethlehem, taking care of his father's sheep. There he played his harp, and looked round upon the lambs of the flock; he saw the grapes growing in rich and tempting clusters. Suddenly he became conscious of the wonderful power he possessed; he seized the lion and the bear, and slew them. When King David was in combat with his foes, there was only one thing he wanted, and that was a drink of water from the well by the gate of Bethlehem. His thoughts went back to the days of his boyhood; he remembered how he used to drink of the well, and he longed for a taste of the water. He would say to his dear Cheddleton friends, that there were many in Manchester, Liverpool, London, successful men of the world, who also longed to drink again at the well of the village of their childhood. They longed for those peaceful, happy times. He would say again that he did not want to say anything that would sound like egotism or vanity—nothing would be more repulsive to him; but if he had said any word that night that would make an impression upon the young men and young women he saw before him, that would arouse the dormant

faculties in their minds, awaken the latent powers of their souls, that would lead them to determine to live a life of industry, of earnestness, of justice, of duty, and of temperance, he would be satisfied and thankful. A centenary of Methodism occurred only once in a lifetime, and the chairman was so much in his element that he seemed to have lived for the gratification of presiding over that deeply interesting meeting.

The Rev. George Bowden next addressed the meeting, and said: "I am glad to be called to my duty by your voice, my brother. While here, however, I have asked, and doubtless some others will ask, 'Why are you here? you are no Cheddleton boy.' True, but I am here as the result of the enterprise of a Cheddleton boy; he fell in love with my sister, and then claimed my presence at this centenary. So also with my friend the Rev. M. G. Pearse; he is a Cornish boy, but he married the daughter of an old Cheddleton boy, and immediately they claim his presence. These Cheddleton boys seem to be a wideawake, enterprising race. This is a wonderful grouping we have to-day. Dr. Wood, with his theological students around him, teaching them a warm and sound theology, and impressing their

characters with his own fine type, and through them how many thousands of their societies and congregations ! All this at the close of a long and useful ministry, having received the highest honour his Conference could give. Our chairman, one of the most useful and acceptable local preachers in the city of Manchester, with his theological class for young men, existing for thirty-five years, and from which have proceeded sixty young men who are now some of them eminent and all useful ministers in the Church of England, among the Congregationalists, and with ourselves. The eloquent speaker who has just sat down, whose industry and enterprise have not only enabled him to contribute to Christian work, but in commercial life have given a position of mark ; it is only a few years ago the *Daily News* said of him in one of its leaders that at that time 'he had in his hands the cheese trade of the world.' David Roe, the successful minister of the metropolis of the north. Then follow the numerous branches of the Coopers, one granddaughter in which distinguishes herself as an invaluable leader of the sisterhood of our blessed West Central Mission ; the Rigbys, some of whom I revered in my boy-

hood, as among the ablest preachers in the pulpits of Stockport. This is a wonderful record of successful work, ever increasing as the years roll on, all originating in this out-of-the-way, beautiful little village. There is meaning, blessed meaning now in 'This man was born there.' By-and-by, when we can read the whole history backwards, as we do a portion to-day, how full our hearts will be to note the large blessing which has attended quiet, faithful, unostentatious village work ! I remember hearing the venerable Dr. Dixon say in his rich, dulcet tones, 'All great men are born in villages. Who ever heard of anybody being born in London? I never did, except John Milton.' In Newcastle-on-Tyne I remember counting up twenty-three of the most generous and useful men in that society, the very backbone of the Methodism of the north of England, all converted to God in the schools and chapels of the Weardale villages. In Liverpool and Manchester I was amazed to find in my pastoral rounds that the great bulk of our societies came from the villages of Cumberland, Yorkshire, and Lincolnshire. Surely, as we lose our hold on the villages of the country, our chief source of strength as a church

will be gone. Why has Cheddleton been such a power? It had a seed within itself. Remember it is only ripe seed that will multiply and grow. Green, half-ripe grain will not grow. There were those who not only believed in a present salvation, and in a free salvation, but also in a full salvation. The Master's illustration is leaven. You know it is no use putting yeast in the meal, and leaving it outside on a cold day. It will never conquer the meal without heat. You bring it near the fire, and then it is a match for the meal, and conquers the meal. This little society had the leaven of truth and the living fire. As a consequence, a boy could not come to the village for a few months but the warm-hearted Methodists caught him in their school and chapel, and sent him away with 'the best fortune for any youth—a new heart and God's blessing.' So it was with little Wood, little Willshaw, little Warrington, or little Roe. This had never been with a lukewarm or cold Church. I trust Cheddleton Methodism will be true to its blessed traditions, and its future will not be less blessed than its past."

The Rev. H. L. Yorke, M.A., of Liverpool, followed, and spoke at some length on the beautiful

situation of the village. He was proud and happy to be connected with Cheddleton, and if he had been permitted to choose the place of his birth, he certainly should have chosen Cheddleton as his birthplace. However, not having had that choice, he had done the next best thing, and married a lady whose father was born there; and if young men who were intending to marry were wise, he should say they would not overlook Cheddleton, as the most likely place to win a good wife.

Mr. John Hall, of Leek, made a very powerful appeal on behalf of freedom from pew rents in all our places of worship. He should like to see all the seats in that chapel free and open to all comers. What was wanted nowadays was a religion of a real and genuine character, without any class distinctions in the house of God.

The Rev. David Roe followed at some length, and spoke of his early days at Cheddleton, pointing out the corner of the chapel where he was fond of ensconcing himself, for the purpose of making the Sunday school lively. He gave some interesting descriptions of his life in America, and of the circumstances which led to his becoming a minister in the Methodist Connexion in England.

At the close of the meeting the chairman announced that the collection was £107, and a very delightful and successful meeting terminated with the singing of the Doxology. The celebration was continued on the Tuesday evening, when a deeply interesting lecture was delivered to a large audience by the Rev. M. G. Pearse in the Mount Pleasant Chapel, Leek, on "Old Folks at Home."

The Rev. F. Haines opened the proceedings with a reference to the chapel at Cheddleton, which he spoke of as the model chapel of the Leek Circuit. He called upon Mr. J. T. Warrington to take the chair.

Mr. Warrington, who was received with loud cheers, said that forty years ago, when he was in Leek, one of the most prominent figures was the venerable James Wardle. The next he called to mind was Richard Cutting. He remembered George Bull; he was scathing in his denunciations of finery in ladies' dresses. There were the Hammerslys and the Johnsons; William Gibson, a powerful preacher; and Charles Walker, a good earnest man, but peculiar—it was said that he left his wife at the church door after his marriage to take a distant preaching appointment. There was

Thomas Doxey, very fond of tea, who used to say that, if the Duke of Wellington and Napoleon had met together over a cup of tea before the battle, there would have been no Waterloo. Then there was Clement Gwynne, a wise and judicious friend; and their dear old friend the late lamented Stephen Goodwin. All these persons deserved a niche in Methodist history and fame. He then introduced the lecturer as one of the eloquent preachers of the day.

The Rev. M. G. Pearse, who was received with loud applause, said he hated eloquence; he was only a simple preacher, and did not believe in eloquence. He proceeded to give a number of anecdotes (which caused roars of laughter) of the Cornish people, and their habits and customs. One of these, which caused the heartiest merriment, was concerning an old town-crier, who gave the following announcement: "O yez! O yez! O yez! There is going to be a teetotal meeting at the teetotal chapel to-night, when three young chaps will speak as never spoke afore." The lecturer then gave an eloquent description of "Old Rosie," and how he used to visit the poor old woman when he was a child. A touching descrip-

tion was this of "Old Rosie," her thoughts and her sayings, her aspirations and her beautiful death. His next introduction was to the Cornish miner, who was not English, but British. He was disposed to think that Wales and Cornwall had more largely contributed to Nonconformist pulpits than all the rest of England put together. He then gave in the Cornish dialect "Anthony's Story of his Wife's Conversion," which greatly impressed the audience. He concluded a very interesting and eloquent lecture with some pathetic reminiscences of the Cornish fishermen. The collection at the close, towards the alterations in the chapel, was £35.

On Thursday, the 10th, a free tea was given to the children of the village in the National Schools. About three hundred sat down, and evidently enjoyed the beautiful feast provided for them. After tea the children and friends turned out in the adjoining meadow, and were dispersed over the field in little groups, playing and romping to their hearts' content. About six o'clock they were called together by the playing of the brass band, and, being formed into line, they marched in procession round the village, and afterwards returned to the

chapel, where a meeting was held, and very kindly presided over by the Rev. A. H. Boucher, M.A., vicar of the parish, and a very pleasant and enjoyable evening was spent. Much praise is due to Mrs. Wain for the pains she took in preparing the children for their singing and recitations, which were well executed, and to the friends in the choir, who rendered very efficient and willing service throughout the entire series of meetings and services connected with this most delightful Centenary Celebration.

The following leading article was printed in the *Leek Times*:—"Cheddleton Wesleyan Methodists will remember with pardonable pride the events of the passing week. Not only were the services and meetings of the week commemorative of the Centenary of the local Wesleyan Society, but they were the occasion of the gathering of several natives of the soil, who have made for themselves a name in the world, and have shed a lustre upon the pretty little village. Under these circumstances a large amount of success was assured; but few expected that the object of the celebration would be so fully achieved. Such, however, is the case; and those who have worked so hard and so well deserve the

heartiest congratulations. There was, too, in all the proceedings, a degree of enthusiasm that speaks well for the future of the society. The suggestions made by several speakers as to the necessity of continuing to cultivate the Methodism of the country districts were particularly *à propos* to the occasion ; for the fact is apparent to every one, that people bred in the great towns, comparatively speaking, do not cling to their religion, whatever religion they may profess, with the same mystic fervour as those whose early life and early impressions have been of the green fields, the leafy lanes, and the fresh invigorating country air."

I cannot close this account without reference to the generosity and kindness of Mr. and Mrs. John Hall, of Ball Haye Hall, Leek, who from first to last entered most heartily into the work done at the chapel, and kindly opened their house, and hospitably entertained the ministers and friends from a distance, and in many ways largely contributed to the complete success of the Centenary Celebration.





CHAPTER XI.

“ Hail, Saviour, Prince of Peace !
Thy kingdom shall increase,
Till all the world Thy glory see ;
And righteousness abound,
As the great deep profound,
And fill the earth with purity.”

Hymn 637, WESLEY.

IN reviewing these historical sketches of Methodism in my own native village, several practical thoughts are suggested. It is clear that the villages of England have held a very important position in Methodism from the beginning ; and it is interesting to notice the special attention given to the villages by the Saviour and His apostles : “ They went through the cities and villages, preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom of God ; ” and as it was in the early days of Christianity, so it was in the days of John Wesley and the early Methodist preachers—they scattered

the seeds of truth over the land, and they gathered much fruit in the rural parts of the country, and it was soon found that Methodism was admirably adapted to meet the wants of those who dwelt in the villages. The great feature of those early times was the strongly marked conversions which took place among the people. Many of these cases were as striking and impressive as the cases recorded in the New Testament.

The change was often so great as to produce wonder, astonishment, and awe in the neighbourhood; and one such strongly marked conversion often led to the conversion of a number of others. These men became mighty in prayer; hence the prayer-meeting became to them a social means of grace which had great attractions; and they were ready also to bear their testimony to the power of Divine grace, and to witness both in speech and song.

“What we have felt and seen
With confidence we tell,
And publish to the sons of men
The signs infallible.”

The Methodist class-meeting, therefore, was exactly suited to their experience; they delighted

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in the fellowship of saints, and in these weekly meetings much religious instruction and profit was realised, the tendency to worldliness and unbelief and despondency was checked, the snares and temptations of Satan were overcome, and the souls of the people were stimulated to press forward with increased ardour to the higher and richer enjoyments of the heavenly life. This social prayer and conversation on religious and experimental topics brought out and developed the natural gifts of these people, and many of them soon began to give evangelistic addresses, and these, consisting as they frequently did of personal experience, were in themselves a powerful illustration of the ability and willingness of Christ to save; and in this way and by these means the work of God spread with considerable rapidity. As the village societies became numerous, it was soon made manifest that the Sunday services in these rapidly increasing societies could never be supplied by the ministers who were set apart to the work of the ministry, and therefore the office and work of the local preacher became an established institution in Methodism. It will be no exaggeration to say that the village societies have been by far the most

prolific in the growth of both ministers and local preachers; and many of the most distinguished men of Methodism, whether as ministers, local preachers, or other laymen, have been indebted to village Methodism for the honourable and useful position they occupy in the Church and the world to-day.

I would like to say a word to those members of our Church whose lot is cast in the villages. It may be confessed that many are the discouragements to which they are subjected. When young people are brought to God in the Sunday school, or in connection with the services in the chapel, and give every indication of a life of usefulness, their removal to some town or city at a distance, and the blank occasioned by it, is a cause of discouragement to those who are left behind; and the one element wanting among them is this youthful ardour, which is often so powerful in its influence upon the children and young people growing up. This is without doubt a very disheartening circumstance, especially where the society is small and the members are few. Yet we must remember there is another side to the picture. Any one living in the town or city who has taken the trouble to

ascertain the facts of the case will find that many of those who are carrying on the work and bearing the burdens of the Church were converted while young in some remote country village, and are now filling the offices of leaders, local preachers, society and circuit stewards, Sunday-school teachers, and superintendents. The loss in the villages is very great ; yet I would remind these good people that in their small and narrow circle of influence they are sowing seed which is destined to bring forth a plentiful harvest amidst the crowded populations of the city and town, and are indirectly contributing to the ultimate triumph of the Gospel, not only in our country, but in the world at large.

I would presume to address a few words to the local preachers, on whom the villages are dependent to a very large extent for the supply of the pulpit from Sabbath to Sabbath. I hope that any of my brethren who may read this simple account of what has been accomplished in a very small village may ponder over the grand possibilities of a life of earnest labour among the rural populations of our land. Consider the materials of which your congregations consist. The bulk of them are poor

people, it is true ; but is it not said "the poor have the Gospel preached unto them," and that when our Divine Master preached on the mountain slopes of Galilee "the common people heard Him gladly"?

The great majority of God's faithful people have been drawn from this class in all generations. Is it not a fact that, if a poor lad is converted in a country village in early life, his surroundings are more favourable to the development of a vigorous and healthy life, both spiritually and intellectually, than is the case with youths brought up in large towns? In the town the youth is pressed on all sides by the works and ways of man ; in the country, by the wonderful works of God. When the heart of a country lad has been changed by the grace of God, what sources of instruction are opened out to him in the works of Nature and Providence ! With what wonder and joy he gazes upon the grandeur and glory of the heavens ! And, feeling a conscious and blessed relationship to God as his Father and to Christ as his Saviour, no wonder he should exclaim, "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained ; what is man,

that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou makest account of him?" And if the same youth be a tiller of the soil, his very employment is a continual sermon; the breaking up of the hard ground reminds him of the breaking up of the fallow ground of the heart by the Spirit of God; the sowing of seeds in the field is a reminder of the good seed of the kingdom which is scattered broadcast every Sabbath day. The beautiful sunbeams remind him of "the Sun of Righteousness, rising with healing in His wings." The birds, as they warble out their songs, remind him of the Saviour's beautiful lesson of trust in God, as our kind and loving Father Who provides for the wants of His children. The flowers also speak to him of the care of God for His people, as to all the real necessities of life. The harvest, as it ripens and is ready for the reapers, reminds him of the end of life and the end of the world, when the good shall be gathered into the heavenly garner, and the unbelieving and disobedient will be consigned to outer darkness. These and many similar themes will be continually suggested to the mind of an enlightened and devoted youth, and will be a wonderful preparation for active service in the school or pulpit of the

village chapel ; and no wonder if some of these young men become very powerful advocates for Christ and His truth.

The village congregation therefore offers to the zealous evangelist an opportunity for doing good and successful Christian work perhaps hardly equalled in any other sphere of labour ; and godly young men whose desire is to do good, and whose gifts, if carefully cultivated, would render efficient service, should be encouraged and assisted by those who have had the advantage of education and experience. A largely increased number of young men are needed in this harvest field, where much fruit may be gathered.

May I here advise young men who are beginning to preach not to be content with a service once in three or four weeks, but to aim at taking on an average at least one service per week all the year round ? If this is done, the stimulus needed for preparation will be kept up, and the habit of reading and gathering material for constant use will be formed. The modern practice of dividing and subdividing circuits has not tended to increase the number of local preachers ; on the contrary, in many circuits the places are so few where a local

preacher can exercise his gifts, that many find they have not time to prepare so many new sermons, and they become discouraged, and give up preaching altogether. In former times they often walked long distances, and visited seven or eight places in a quarter; hence by constant practice many became powerful preachers of Christ's Gospel.

Another fact in modern Methodism is the large development of Sunday schools all over the land, and many young men who in former times would have been at work in the villages are engaged as teachers in the Sunday schools. Thus one very important branch of work interferes with, and to some extent cripples another. As, however, the work in villages is acknowledged by all to be of great importance, every encouragement should be given to those whose abilities qualify them for the work of evangelists. It is a cause of great thankfulness that the great Head of the Church has put it into the heart of the Rev. Thomas Champness to care for the villages of England, and to know that his noble band of evangelists are scattered over the land, and by their efforts many a drooping village cause is roused and quickened into vigorous life. It is also with great pleasure and gratitude we

observe the determined efforts of the Rev. James E. Clapham, at the head of our great Connexional Home Missionary Committee, to maintain and advance the Methodist cause in the villages. We remember that most determined efforts are frequently made to close the chapel and Sunday school in the village, and thus deprive the people of those unspeakable advantages Methodism has brought to thousands of families.

Another evil of modern times, and one which requires immediate attention, is the rivalry of different sections of the Methodist Church. In some small villages there are two and sometimes three separate places of worship, with a mere handful of people in each. If these were all meeting in one place, there would be a fair congregation, a great saving of labour in supplying the pulpit, and the scandal of these divisions would be avoided. One of the very pleasing features of our little village is, there has never been more than one Methodist chapel and society in the place, and hence division and strife have been unknown among them; they have kept "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

Surely the time has come when this question of

overlapping should come to an end, and all the denominations of Methodists unite in their work in the villages of England? And whichever section has the best accommodation for carrying on the work, let the others give way, and thus put the strength and progress of the work of God before denominational distinction and importance.

Another characteristic of modern times is the multiplication of railways in every part of the country; these have not always been an advantage to village Methodism. In olden times the ministers were accustomed to take several villages in their round, and stay at each of the places all night, and thus spend a considerable time in pastoral visitation; but now, through the division of circuits, and the possibility of getting home the same night, the people in many cases are not seen at their own houses during the term of a minister's residence in the circuit. When we remember the diligence of many of the clergy of the Established Church in this respect, we need not wonder if Methodism should decline in many of our villages. The young ministers may rest assured there is no department of their important and responsible work that will pay better, or be more fruitful of

lasting good, than the time and labour bestowed upon these rural societies.

Considering, therefore, how well adapted is our Church in its economical arrangements for meeting the intellectual and religious wants of the country people, and how many noble examples of a robust and vigorous godliness have been supplied of men who have risen into power and usefulness, surely our villages will not be permitted to languish for lack of diligent oversight! If we value our Church privileges, if we feel any interest or concern in the future welfare of our country, if we wish to see this land lifted out of the grasp of infidelity on the one hand and superstition on the other, if we wish to heal the moral sores of our country, if we wish to liberate the captive souls of thousands of our countrymen, if we wish to take our stand as the harbinger of liberty and peace to the oppressed and morally degraded nationalities of earth—then it will be necessary to spread the knowledge of Christ through all the villages of our land.

Let the philanthropist know that this work of evangelising the villages is the highest form of philanthropy, and let the politician know that this is the most successful method of reforming the

laws under which we live, and bringing them into harmony with the precepts and teachings of God's Word; let men of wealth and education, trade and commerce, science and literature—men of light and leading in the various walks of life—let them all remember the truth applicable to all ages and nations: that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."

